

# **Women and Theatre for Development in Swaziland**

**By**

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**A thesis submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for  
The Doctor of Philosophy Degree**

**At**

**The School of Oriental and African Studies  
The University of London**

**February 2008**



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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis explores women and theatre for development in Swaziland. It focuses on how theatre for development is used as a tool in the development of women. Firstly, I examine the key concepts used throughout the thesis and I pay special attention to Theatre for Development. In the second chapter, I give an account of the country's history and pay special attention to the social status of women. In chapter 3, I examine the various forms of performance found in Swaziland and how they impact on the development of Swazi women. In the fourth chapter, I consider the evolution of literary practice in Swaziland and discuss two play-texts in English by H.I.E Dhlomo, a key literary figure and pioneer playwright of modern black drama in South Africa. I explore *A Witch in My Heart* by Hilda Kuper, a white anthropologist who lived in Swaziland in the mid twentieth century, and lastly, *The Paper Bride* by Zodwa Motsa, a contemporary Swazi writer. Next, in chapter 5, I investigate the first phase of Theatre for Development in Swaziland where non-governmental organizations, the Swazi Government and independent individuals worked together using Theatre for Development in Swazi communities. I consider first the workshops initiated by the youth. In chapter 6, I give an account of workshops involving whole communities and the *kudliwa inhloko ebandla*, a workshop that involved men only. In all these workshops I examine how they impacted on the development of women. I then conclude with a discussion of the findings of the study and their implications for the development of women.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Above all, I would like to thank God whom I regard as a Person ever present in my life. I thank Him for aligning me with all the people who have been of great help in making this project a success.

My greatest and special thanks go to Dr Frances Harding who has been a God sent angel in a human body. I thank her for her superb guidance, insight and constructive criticism. Without her, this study would not have been a success. *Nginyabonga kakhulu* Harding! I dare not leave out my supervisory committee members, Dr Akin Oyetade and Dr Wayne Dooling. You have no idea how far your contributions have gone. Thank you. More thanks to the rest of the staff in the African Languages and Cultures Department as well as Development Studies. Professor Philip Jaggar you have been such a support when the going got tough. I really appreciate!

This research would not have even existed without the generous sponsorship of the Association of Commonwealth Universities together with the British Council. You did more than sponsor my studies and went out to parent me when I needed it the most. Clouette Coke and Sharon Ayo you have outdone yourselves!

To all my colleagues, I appreciate the moments of encouragement: Montre, you were there from the first steps and Dr Carolyn Hart you have proved to be a friend indeed when I needed help the most! My colleagues from other universities such as Victor Laden, your support is immeasurable!

I am heavily indebted to the SOAS Students Support Service Staff, Alison Barty, Heather Phillips and Judith Barnett who have never been tired of seeing my face and name since I embarked on my study.

I praise God for my Church family members: firstly at CCL, Pastors Richard and Rosie, CBE Heather Cowl, CBE Lorna Hamilton Brown, Kate Kirk, Denise Brown and more brothers and sisters. Dodds and Partners Solicitors, Teaching Personnel and the Lettings Company, I appreciate the support you have given me.

To you my sweeties, Man of God Sibusiso, Woman of God Nqobile and Man of God Mazulu: thank you for being the beautiful stars where scars are supposed to be. I love you all, Mncwa! Mncwa!

To Mama MaRosie, *sisi* Busisiwe and *sisi* Zanele, thank you for your prayers and unending support. I love you. My church family LCF elders, members, especially the worship team, thank you for the love and warmth. My West Knighton families, the Chizemas, and my neighbours John Shepherd and Stanley Mary, thank you for your care. John, your proofreading this marked that you are an angel in a human body indeed.

I am immensely indebted to the friends who picked me up when the going got really tough: Phil and Vanessa Bennett, Phephile Zwane, Dr Emily Cheserem and finally Mary and Sibongile. Thank you for believing in me!



More than anyone else I am indebted to my fellow Swazi people, especially women on whom this study is focused. *Tintfombi taMgwami*, I celebrate you for standing through it all. I cannot name you all, but to name a few, I will thank Prof Zodwa Motsa, Dr Sarah Dupond-Mkhonza and Dr Lucy Dlamini to have used your pens as swords in the area of literature. We follow in your steps BoDzadze!

As for you giants in the area of Theatre for Development, words fail me; I have been in a far away land but you stood by me all the way through. I thank and celebrate you champions: Modison Magagula and all your SNDS members, Maswati Dlodlu and all your ASTG members, *boMoyo*, Larry Mhlanga and more. You young men I call the Siphocosini Big Three, Nhlanhla Motsa, Mduduzi Mdluli and Sifiso Mamba, take a High Five for Big sister!

A gigantic thank you shout goes to the institutions and NGOs dedicated to development in Swaziland: UNISWA, Macmillan, FLAS, SWAGAA, Council of Swaziland Churches, PSI, NERCHA, UNICEF, SBIS, CANGO and all those under the CANGO umbrella. My special interviewees I cannot name you all, but the few *Emalangenani Babe* Dlamini from SBIS, Princess Tfobhi and Thami Dlamini represent you all. Thank you!

Thanks to the Men and Women of God in Ministry, you have been there to maintain my real life, the spiritual part of me: My Daddy Dr C.P Gumedze thank you for fathering and mothering me. Finally, special thanks to my Special Man of God, my mentor, my prayer partner and much more, Dr Mike Murdock –You have stretched my faith. Thank you, Your Majesty!

**This is for you *Make Inkhosikati LaMncina* –You planted the seed and passion in me to be the best I can be! *Khwanati Lami*!**

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Laying the Foundation

#### 1.0 Introduction

*Phezu komkhono!*  
(On your arms!)

*Phezu Komkhono* is the slogan of the Swazi women's regiment, *Lutsango* (hedge). It evokes a bird that sings very early in the morning during the ploughing and planting season. Swazi people interpret the bird to be saying it is time to wake up and work, and they then use the idiomatic expression for work, *phezu komkhono*, which means that every person's arms have to be active and work in the fields. The expression, *phezu komkhono* has extended to refer to all developmental actions that women do towards solving their problems and generally improving their lives. The call for women to 'wake up and work' is by women themselves, calling to one another.

Swazi women are as diverse as women anywhere. The women's regiment, *Lutsango* is composed of women from a wide range of backgrounds and situations: literate and non-literate; married and unmarried; young and old; rich and poor; urban and rural and those that fall in-between. Differences have been exacerbated by people's experiences during the colonial era, which left Swazi women in a more complicated situation than they were before. Whilst along with the colonial era came many advantages for women, retaining substantial numbers of cultural practices from a pre-colonial era has meant that life remains difficult for women.

#### 1.1 The Problem

Following an outcry from many sectors of the Swazi nation, especially women's organizations, the Swaziland Government commissioned a study to address the gender disparity that were said to exist in the country in October 1994<sup>1</sup>. The outcome of the

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<sup>1</sup> Riba, Phindile (1996) *Gender and Women's Issues Position Paper and The Swaziland Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace*. Mbabane: S.N.

study was an identification of realities that prevail in the country regarding women's discrimination:

The maintenance of tradition and custom makes Swaziland a cohesive society with strong cultural identity. Gender roles are very clearly defined with women being home-makers and care givers whilst men are the decision makers and authority figures. Women in Swaziland, as in most societies, are still judged to be less valuable than men. They cannot participate fully in economic and public life: have limited access to positions of power: have narrower employment choices: lower earnings than men and continue to struggle to reconcile activities outside the home with their traditional domestic roles. Too often they have little or no voice in decisions that affect them at both community level and within their own household (Riba, Phindile, *Gender and women's issues position paper and the platform for action for equality, development and peace* Mbabane: S.N. 1996: 25)

This research exposed numerous gender discrepancies. As a way of further dealing with the gender problems in the country, 'Women and Law in Southern Africa' (WLSA)<sup>2</sup> also carried out a series of research studies in South African countries including Swaziland exposing the gender inequalities and identifying their sources. The WLSA report, *Charting the maze: women in pursuit of justice in Swaziland*, identifies the injustices as arising from both Swazi and western cultural practices. In addition to the roles women have always carried out from the pre-colonial era, they have assumed the roles that used to be for men. This includes women who manage resources over which they have no control:

While women are daily managers and users of natural resources, largely for the benefit of others, we are not involved in the major decisions that affect these resources and the environment (Hlanze, Zakhe and Mhabela, Lolo, *Beyond Inequalities: Women in Swaziland*. Mbabane: Women and Law in Southern Africa Research Trust (WLSA), 1998:1).

## **1.2 Argument and Aim of the study**

The main aim of this study is to investigate the role and effect of Theatre-for-Development as a tool in the development of the lives of women in Swaziland. In order

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<sup>2</sup> 'Women and Law in Southern Africa' is an action oriented research organization in seven countries of Southern Africa: Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Their main aim is to contribute to the sustained well-being of women within families and societies. They achieve this by engaging in collaborative strategic and action research in the socio-legal field and promoting of lobbying for legal reforms and policy changes on laws and practices that disadvantage women.



to pursue the investigation I give the Swazi background and consider the social status of women. I examine various forms of the theatre in Swaziland and how they have been developed over the years and pay particular attention to the role of women.

### **1.3 Research questions**

I began my research by asking “What is the social status of women in Swaziland?” Researching the answer to this question included exploring how the status of women has been over the years. The next questions were: “What are the forms of performance found in Swaziland?” and “What are the effects of the various performances on the lives of women?”

### **1.4 Research Methods**

I gathered the data used in this study in three ways: by reading historical documentation about Swaziland, by reading theoretical and critical texts on drama, and by interviewing people and actively participating in developmental theatre activities in various Swazi communities. I interviewed custodians of Swazi culture, community leaders and members of the royal family, theatre practitioners, actors and actresses as well as theatre workshops participants in Swaziland. I also use information acquired through my own socialization into the Swazi way of life and my participation in performances. These included lullabies, riddles and proverbs, storytelling, life-stories, praise poetry, chants, songs and dance. I give the girls’ *umhlanga* (reeds) dance special attention because it remains a significant part of Swazi rituals. I use performances by boys, men and specialist *timbongi* (praise poets). My active participation in Swazi writers’ associations and numerous community development activities also gave me data for this study.

As in any other patriarchal community early constraints on women by men and women’s resistance to or acquiescing in such, still exists in Swaziland. Looking at the lives of a majority of Swazi women, there is a danger of assuming that they have given in to the coercing that stems from the patriarchal structures. However, an investigation of the country’s history and the gender relations that have prevailed from the time of the establishment of the kingdom can clarify matters. In order to make a justifiable and

reliable analysis of the Swazi case of women and, for my analysis, I used some post-colonial and gender theories, and the philosophy propounded by Paulo Freire in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*<sup>3</sup>.

### 1.5 Definition of Concepts

In order to make my conceptual framework accessible I define some concepts applicable in the context of this study. My selection criteria stemmed from the problem at hand, the desired end product and the process of reaching the desired end. Within the Swazi community gender inequalities have resulted from the process of internalised oppression. This has been formulated and articulated through some of the theatrical practices of the country. The main aim here is for Swazi women to deal with gender inequalities and to engage in a process of their own development, using Theatre-for-Development as one of their 'tools.' Employing this 'tool' involves the processes of participation and dialogue. Concurrently, this means the women's engaging in the process which Paulo Freire called *conscientisation*. Therefore, the special terms I define here comprise gender, internalised oppression, participation, development and *conscientisation*. Theatre-for-Development forms the key practice.

#### 1.5.1 Gender

The term 'gender' signifies, first and foremost, differences in biological make-up of human beings, i.e. the sex of the species as either male or female. A notable number of scholars define gender in terms of relations of power.

Gender relations are constituted in terms of the relations of power and dominance that structure the life chances of women and men. Thus, gender divisions are not fixed in biology, but constitute an aspect of wider social divisions of labour, and this in turn is rooted in the conditions of production and reproduction and reinforced by cultural, religious and ideological systems prevailing in a society. (Ostergaard, Lise, *Gender and Development: A Practical Guide* 1992: 6)

Fundamentally, the social construction of gender in terms of 'maleness' and 'femaleness', foregrounds the biological construct in making and using culture as an

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<sup>3</sup> Freire, Paulo (1972) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

effective control of one group over the other: in the case of Swaziland the male over the female. Therefore, when it comes to understanding gender classifications, 'femaleness' and 'maleness' appear to have more to do with the processes of socialisation than biology. Like every society, Swazi people have their own socialising systems that effectively pass on gender ideologies from one generation to the next. Such systems include the performances that are found in the country. Gender roles in Swaziland have changed dramatically over time:

As a result of heavy male rural-urban migration, many women are now de facto heads of households. Statistics show that up to 70% female headed households exist in some parts of Swaziland (Riba 1996: 14).

If sustainable development has to be attained in any given environment such as Swaziland, the prevailing gender inequalities need to be addressed. The socialisation strategies also have an effect on the gender problem. Egara Stanley Kabaji undertook a study that intensively investigated the construction of gender through the narrative process of African folktales: a case of the Maragoli folktale of the Luhyia community of Kenya. As part of his findings he writes:

Although the folktales, may, in a direct way, mirror the social reality, they at the same time, are a site from which the Maragoli construct ideologies about gender relations. (Kabaji, Egara Stanley 2005: 58)<sup>4</sup>

As I researched performances in Swaziland, I paid special attention to gender related themes in order to identify their role as a source of the gender inequalities that prevail in the country. Swazi women utilise the same performances as the dominant group in order to impose and sustain an ideology that promotes gender inequalities. Women, however, use them to subvert the imposed ideologies to invent new ideologies that facilitate their own development.

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<sup>4</sup> Kabaji, Egara Stanley (2005) *The Construction of Gender through the Narrative Process of the African Folktale: A case Study of the Maragoli Folktale*. PhD thesis, The University of South Africa (unpublished).

Such attempts are a struggle because the women are a product of the same patriarchal society as that which subjugates them. As part of society, women's value systems emulate those of the rest of society.

The patriarchal bargain, exert a powerful influence on shaping women's gendered subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology in different contexts. They also influence both potential for and specific forms of active and passive resistance in the face of their oppression (Kandiyoti, Deniz, "Bargaining with Patriarchy" in *Gender and Society* 1988: 27).

Kandiyoti shows that the efforts of women cannot be trivialised because their situation is complicated. Society instils gendered ideologies in women and the women eventually conform. Although the ideologies are oppressive to the women, it is 'easier' for the women to conform to the acceptable expectations of society at the expense of their own freedom because they thus earn a sense of acceptability by society. There have always been, however, some women who refuse to give in to the subjugating force of patriarchy.

The resistant women engage in a struggle to subvert the ideologies that instigate the gender inequalities. They are a minority and their success in the subversions rests on their using the same tools society uses to instil oppressive ideologies that demean the women. Society uses theatrical performances such as folktales:

The folktale telling tradition is thus a system of persuasion dialogue in which the audience embrace as their own, a set of socially constructed and validated gender roles and attitudes. In essence therefore by the time a person is old enough to make choices about anything, let alone something as fundamental as gender roles, he or she has already been engendered (Kabaji 2005: 7)

Such 'persuasion dialogue,' imposes patriarchal ideologies, which are oppressive and deprive women of self esteem essential to every human being. This 'persuasion dialogue' becomes a process that seizes the mindset of a girl from an early age and confines it within the restrictive patriarchal ideologies. This confinement curtails the natural ability to make choices in life. The imposed mindset tampers with the genuine personal choices in life. The ideologies – articulated in 'persuasion dialogue' – that society imposes on

each individual during lifelong socialisation are what I refer to as 'internalised oppression.'

### **1.5.2 Internalised oppression**

This lethal force of internalised oppression is what happens when oppressed people have their minds contaminated by the ideas that their "oppressors" instil in them. The oppressors do this in phases. The first phase is when the oppressed are aware that they are oppressed and sometimes try to reject the oppressive measures inflicted on them. There is hope that the oppressed will confront their oppressors. However oppressors are skilled; they start tampering with the mind of the oppressed making them believe some of the negative ideas about them to be true. In Swaziland, from the pre-colonial era, women have engaged in the battle to resist subjugation by the patriarchal system:

Oppressed people usually come to believe the negative things that are said about them and even act them out. This is called "internalised oppression." No other form of liberation can get very far unless the participants in the struggle are also freeing themselves from these negative beliefs about themselves (Bishop, Anne, *Becoming an Ally: Breaking the Cycle of Oppression in People* 2002: 158)

The custodians of patriarchy used socialisation tools such as folktales and riddles to discourage women from confronting patriarchy. Wanjiku Kabira notes that the Gikuyu oral narratives portray women negatively: "unreliable, disobedient, irresponsible, disloyal, disagreeable, adulterous, cunning, senseless, gullible, forgetful, evil, lazy, and full of trickery" (Kabira, "Gender and Politics of Control" in Austin Bukonya and Okoth Okombo (eds.) *Understanding Oral Literature* 1994: 80). By frequently repeating such folktales, women believe the ideas to be true. Thus 'internalising' the oppressive stereotype:

Women are shackled by their own self-image, by centuries of interiorization of ideologies of patriarchy and gender hierarchy. Her own reaction to objective problems therefore are often self-defeating and self-crippling. She reacts with fear dependency complexes and attitudes to please and cajole where more self-assertive actions are needed (Ogundipe-Leslie, Morala, *Recreating Ourselves: African Women and Critical Transformations* 1994: 64)

In his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire challenges formal education, calling it “narrative education” where “the teacher as narrator leads the students to memorise mechanically the narrated content” (Freire 1972: 45). He explains how this kind of education removes from learners, the human aspect of active engagement with whatever they are learning, turning them into ignorant recipients of knowledge from the teacher who ‘knows everything’:

Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor... The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world (Freire 1972: 45 and 47).

The kind of education Freire talks about here is what goes on during the socialisation phase of Swazi children, where society does not expect young people to express their opinions on any matter, but encourages passive acceptance of all that society teaches the young. In the Swazi case it goes on throughout every individual’s lifetime as society instils further all the values that were ‘deposited’ during childhood socialisation. This kind of learning is ‘domestication’ as opposed to ‘liberation,’ (Freire 1972).

WLSA, addressing the issue of domestic violence in Swaziland attests that the majority of domestic violence cases stem from socialisation:

Socialisation is socially learned behaviour whereby an individual internalises attitudes and adopts particular roles as instructed by society. The majority of the interviewees mentioned socialisation as a contributing factor to domestic violence. In a patriarchal society such as Swaziland, men and women are socialised into believing that men are superior to women (WLSA, *Multiple Jeopardy: Domestic Violence and Women’s Search for Justice in Swaziland* 2001: 73-74)

Society instils into the young people’s minds certain ideologies which make them develop either positive or negative beliefs about themselves. This is common, especially with young girls who learn to accept from an early age that they are inferior to men, and that it is taboo for them to challenge men. This kind of internalised oppression of girls and women removes from them any form of personal interrogation of situations, and

encourages conformity and adaptability to whatever ideas are handed down to them by those in positions of power.

Internalised oppression, as a force, is a hurdle in the development process and slows down or stops completely any attempt to engage in development. It is an enemy of development and discourages people from being innovative, exploring possibilities that are available before them as well as those that can be created by them as a way of addressing situations before them. As a result of this, the oppressed people accept certain ideas about themselves and believe that they are to blame for their oppression. Sometimes they think that whatever undesirable situations they may encounter, they are the norm that cannot be altered. They believe that their potential is limited and cannot go beyond what those in power over them permit. The negative beliefs lower the self-esteem of the oppressed and make them to be uncertain about their true identity. Internally oppressed people are “colonised” in their “minds” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o 1986, *Decolonising the Mind: Politics of language in African Literature*). This pursuit of correcting the state of internalised oppression is similar to that which post-colonial theorists do in reclaiming the losses that occurred during the colonisation of countries.

### **1.5.3 Post Colonialism**

Post-colonialism is the enquiry that aims to examine the ongoing effects of colonisation and Europe’s domination of some countries of the world. Colonialism functioned in a similar way to the patriarchal system; the coloniser being the patriarchal figure and the colonised being the subordinate female. Firstly, the colonisers destroyed the self-identity of the people they sought to dominate by convincing them that they were weaker and inferior to them. Frantz Fanon, in his *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) suggests that colonialism has created a sense of division and alienation in the self identity of the non-white colonised peoples. The history, culture, languages, customs and beliefs of the colonisers were considered universal, normative and superior to the local indigenous culture of the colonised. The colonised developed a divided sense of self. By adopting the culture of the colonisers the colonised became alienated from their own cultures. This

alienation resulted in the development of hybrid cultures because some innate force within the colonised people made them hold onto their own cultures too.

Fanon contributes to the struggle against colonialism by encouraging the colonised to claim back their own histories in their own way as opposed to the versions produced by the colonisers but warns against merely reproducing concepts and beliefs of the coloniser as they reclaim their lives.

Other post-colonial theorists, John McLeod, (2000, *Beginning Postcolonialism*) and Edward Said, (1991, *Orientalism*) are concerned about the labelling strategy of the coloniser. Said writes about the labelling of the Orient by the colonisers. This kind of labelling resembles the labelling of women by the patriarchal powers. It is therefore the assignment of the colonised to correct these damages. Time for blaming the coloniser for past damages is gone. The colonised, themselves need to deal with the condition.

Theatre-for-Development as a developmental tool for women enables the participants to reclaim their lost identity. Swazi women have always been struggling within the patriarchal society and when the colonial era came, it brought both liberation for them in some areas and more oppression in other areas. As I examine the historical background of the country in the second chapter, I will do so within the post-colonial context as well in order to efficiently address the situation of the Swazi women.

#### **1.5.4 Participation**

The essence and efficacy of Theatre-for-Development rest partly in its participatory characteristic. Mere presence and attendance in a Theatre-for-Development can often be mistaken for participation. The main objective of Theatre-for-Development is the empowerment of people, and it is impossible without their *active* participation. Participation in this context means the people's assuming full control of their destiny corporately as a community. They do this on their own or even employing help from external parties. Even in the involvement of such parties, the people must be the pro-active subjects of the Theatre-for-Development process.



Participation allows people to explore their potential as they realise that they hold within themselves the power to present themselves in several different ways. Theatre-for-Development stands out among other performance practices by the way in which it draws its content from participants' accounts of their own realities. It therefore provides a space for people to analyse the behaviour of certain individuals known to them by portraying their familiar traits in their performances. In so doing the participants are able to suggest possible avenues for change.

Numerous scholars acclaim the efficiency of participation in a Theatre-for-Development workshop. According to Jumai Ewu the effectiveness of Theatre-for-Development lies in the continuous participation of both theatre practitioners and communities at all stages of the Theatre-for-Development process:

Primarily the objective of Theatre-for-Development is to encourage community participation and dialogue in development whereby community participation in theatre becomes symbolic of and catalytic to its participation in development. Community participation on various levels is essential, and the extent of its presence is a key index of Theatre-for-Development success (Ewu, Jumai "Arts & Development II, Ibadan" in Martin Banham, James Gibbs and Femi Osofisan *African Theatre in Development* 1999: 89)

Ewu's comment demonstrates the vastness of the participation of a community at various levels, including the dialogue that takes place during the introduction of a Theatre-for-Development workshop as part of development within a community. This participation continues during the workshop as people participate in deliberating possible options and making innovations that address the situations of concern to their lives.

It provides a forum for a community to discuss the issues and problems of concern in their lives. It is also an occasion in which the village may come together for communal entertainment. It is a medium through which individuals and the community can recreate themselves. In performing these multiple roles, theatre is both agency of change and, is itself a changed entity. The change occurs in a creative environment through the participation in which both the participants and the medium emerge differently from the starting point (Abah, Oga "Creativity, participation and Change in Practice" in Harding, Frances (Ed.) *The Performance Arts in Africa: a Reader*, 2002: 160)

Frances Harding advances the deliberations by the above cited scholars by explaining that in a Theatre-for-Development activity the demarcation line between actors and spectators is broken as the two parties merge in an endeavour to participate in their development. She emphasises how spectators shift from the role of being entertained to a more active role of contributing to the Theatre-for-Development activity:

In everyone who is present at rehearsal or performance is a participant-performer and a participant-spectator. The opportunity to shift more than once between the two positions is the mechanism which gives its power (Harding, "Neither 'Fixed Masterpiece' nor 'Popular Distraction': Voice, Transformation and Encounter "in Salhi, Kamal (ed.) *African: Art for Self-determination* 1998: 7).

The powerful mechanism Harding refers to here is made possible by the fact that Theatre-for-Development does not require the participants to be expert performers, but they explore possibilities as they move forward "in the creation and presentation of a character they purport to be, and ultimately in definition of *self*" (Harding 1998: 15). Harding demonstrates how Theatre-for-Development is "decentralized and empowering" and lists three key elements of Theatre-for-Development which demonstrate its participatory qualities:

Firstly, the actors are neither trained specialists nor outsiders but ordinary people from the community in which the drama is devised; secondly, the narratives are based on accounts of real life situations which are then fictionalised; thirdly, the resolution to the dramatic crises within the drama is arrived at by 'trying out' ways suggested by either spectators or actors, responding to the fictionalized characters, their relationships and their narratives (Frances Harding, *The Performance Arts in Africa: A Reader* 2002: 19).

Participation in this context therefore, refers to the total involvement of each individual in the Theatre-for-Development activity, ranging from the initiation, planning phases as well as during and after the actual Theatre-for-Development activity. The participants have a sense of belonging to the community involved in the Theatre-for-Development process. Participation accords each individual the opportunity to engage in decision making at various levels. Each time a participant makes a contribution towards the Theatre-for-Development process, whether it is accepted or rejected, becomes a vital element in advancing the process because the contributions create the options from which the community may make their choices in pursuing their development. As each

participant speaks and makes a contribution, they gain authority and ownership of the Theatre-for-Development activity. This is demonstrated in what Frances Harding calls “acquiring a voice”:

The articulation of sound is a demonstration of the right to speak. People who feel themselves without power, do not speak, nor are they given opportunity to speak to those who have power and who can speak – the authoritative voice, the voice of authority. (Harding 1998: 14)

The availability of opportunity for participants to have a voice and articulate their opinions in a Theatre-for-Development process is empowering on its own and makes both individual and communal development a possibility.

### **1.5.5 Development**

Development is at the heart of the practice because its ultimate aim is for people to attain it. Paulo Freire places freedom as the ultimate state of development, and he asserts that development takes place when the human is in the process of “attaining freedom” (Freire, *Cultural Action for Freedom* 1970: 31).

In Swaziland a number of organisations have given themselves to work with the communities in an endeavour to attain development. The Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA), The Family Life Association of Swaziland (FLAS), Council of Swaziland Churches (CSC), Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA), individual research students and lecturers at the University of Swaziland have conducted research and have shown that there are many complexities involved in Swazi women pursuing development. The majority of these articulated that development needs to entail full participation of the marginalized population of the country. The Coordinating Assembly of NGOs Swaziland (CANGO) as the voice of NGOs reports:

The research on the development practice in Swaziland served to challenge development practitioners to review their development framework with a view of adopting development approaches that facilitate participation of the poor, as well as foster a multi-sectoral approach to development (CANGO, *Annual Report 2003-2004: The Good Governance of NGOs in Pursuit of Sustainable Development – Mandatory or Optional?* 2004: 7)

The condition of Swazi women in development, as a marginalized body is complicated in that, as a way of improving their lives, many of them engage in income generating activities ranging from making and selling various items, to big businesses such as owning chains of shops or forms of transport. Yet even some of these wealthy women do not have full control over their income. This challenge stems from the gender inequalities that exist in the country. Development requires a democratised atmosphere, where the people who engage in the development process have control of their lives. It calls for the people to participate in both income generation and decision making about the income expenditure. Frances Harding highlights the need for total development where material development and boosting the individual's self-esteem work hand-in-hand:

'Development' refers as much to 'consciousness-raising' as to material development and essentially encompasses the kinds of inner experiences or *realisations*...I call 'transformation'...It is such a transformation in one's own self perception that may eventually lead to development of a material sort. (Harding 1998: 5)

This kind of development is not easy to achieve in a situation where women remain in psychological bondage and believe that they are inferior to men. In order to make the situation conducive to development the first step towards development should be to undo the internalised oppression. Therefore, this means that women who are engaged in a development activity need to subvert the internalised oppression mechanisms and reclaim their identity and self esteem. This does not require women to fight to be 'like' men, but to take pleasure in their significance and difference from men without any inferiority complex. This calls for an alteration in the current social order.

Development is usually defined as both a process and a goal in bringing about social change in order to improve the living standard of the people. However, there is no single accepted interpretation of what social change entails, nor is there a generally accepted standard to measure improved living standards. For most governments in Africa, development means economic productivity, and technological advancement... the Gross National Product (GNP) is the widely accepted measure of the standard of living. This is an inaccurate indicator because it does not take into account the distribution of economic growth within the country. (Mda, Zakes, *When People Play People: Development Communication Through Theatre* 1993: 39)

In Swaziland, measuring development by the country's GNP is a problem because it does not correlate with the lives of the average people. Swaziland is rated to be among the better developed countries within the SADC region, yet some of the people live below the universal human standard:

The income distribution is still highly skewed as two-thirds of the population is estimated to be living on less than US\$1 (6Emalangeni) a day...The persistent high levels of HIV/AIDS, unemployment, poverty and localized food shortages remain an acid for the country. What is even more disturbing is that those who live below poverty levels are the most affected (CANGO, 2004: 2)

Any developmental activity aiming to address this problematic situation at whose centre rests the HIV/AIDS pandemic cannot effectively do so by simply disseminating information about HIV/AIDS, neglecting the other social factors that are tangled within:

[The] development communication process should involve not merely the transmission of messages on developmental issues, such as the adoption of better agricultural methods, rural sanitation, and primary health care, to the target audiences – the process should also empower the disadvantaged in the rural areas and the urban slums to have a greater control of their social, political and economic institutions. This in turn will lead to their liberation from all forms of political domination and economic dependency. (Mda 1993: 43)

The definition of 'human development' by the United Nations Development Programme places people at the centre of development, and broadly covers all aspects of human life for all people of the world:

Human development is the process of enlarging people's choices so that they can enjoy political freedom, human rights and self-respect. They should also be educated and enjoy a decent standard of living. These would empower the people to achieve their potential to lead fuller and more productive lives ... Creating a healthy and educated society in which people participate freely in social, political and economic decision-making. (UNDP, 2001:7)

In this thesis I have adopted this definition of development by The United Nations because it is comprehensive. A community that is pursuing development would be confident and conscious, believing in its potential to deal with its predicaments. According to Paulo Freire (1972) this kind of development is not a fixed state or condition

that can be attained at one particular point in time, but a continuous endeavour that is negotiated through the process of dialogue among those committed to attaining it. Also, development cannot be given by those who have it, to those who do not. It is a corporate endeavour by people aiming for the same goal. Theatre-for-Development is an appropriate tool that can make possible a developmental change within a community and is enhanced by its use as a theatre which is a friendly and reassuring activity within a community.

### 1.5.6 Theatre

As I define theatre here I use the definitions that are based on an African context. One such aspect of theatre is identified by Zodwa Motsa as “the mandatory involvement of the audience during performance,” (Motsa, “The Missing Link in SiSwati Modern Drama” in Losambe Lokangaka and Devi Sarinjeive (eds.) *Pre-colonial and Post-colonial Drama and Theatre in Africa* 2001: 35) and she finds engagement to “remain a distinct feature in African Drama and Theatre” (ibid). The outstanding component of African theatre forms part of the performance found in Swaziland. Richard Schechner defines performance as “an activity done by an individual or group in the presence of and for another individual or group” (Richard Schechner, *Performance Theory* 1988: 30). Schechner’s definition does not confine performance to obvious activities only, but includes:

The whole constellation of events, most of them passing unnoticed, that take place among both performers and audience from the time the first spectator enters the field of the performance –the precinct where the theater takes place – to the time the last spectator leaves (Schechner 1988: 72).

Schechner’s definition of performance goes beyond the outward activities that occur as performers use action to interact with spectators. It embraces the experiences, actions and reactions of both performers and the audience which take place before, during and after the performance. It removes the strict demarcation between performers and spectators which their labels suggest and makes a possibility of an interchange of roles. Such a definition is in agreement with the forms of performance from most countries from the African continent.

Performance in the Swazi context stem from oral traditions, including narratives, music and rituals. They comprise storytelling, riddles, praise poetry, songs and dance, music and dialogue drama. Peter Larlham notices this and states:

Traditional performances amongst indigenous tribes [sic] of Southern Africa include dance, song and music and narrative forms such as folk tales and praise poems. Folk tales, songs and praise poems have a strong dramatic emphasis in performance. Their content covers a wide range of subjects, reflecting the religious, private and public life of the individual (Larlham, Peter, *Black Theatre, Dance and Ritual in South Africa* 1985: 61).

These performance forms are neither composed nor owned by any specific individual, but by the whole Swazi community because they have been passed on from generation to generation. There are contemporary performances - drama, music, songs, poetry and praises that have been composed by individual people:

The performance that is in the first place determined by the traditions and beliefs of the people tends to reinforce the beliefs too. This study, therefore also examines the relationship between performance and the traditions and beliefs of people. As I explore the performance in the country I focus on its effects on people's behaviour patterns and how performance can be utilized for the development of the people.

There is the tendency in scholarly circles to limit theatre to 'drama' yet the practice covers more than just drama. There have been numerous debates about the existence of drama in pre-colonial Africa. Scholars who argue against its existence tend to use "western aesthetics as the criterion for determining what drama is" (Kennedy Chinyowa, 2001:3). Ossie Enekwe argues that drama in Africa covers more than just drama and extends to more activities within a community:

African drama is more than story telling. It is more of a ritual experience that seeks to recreate and, in the process, affirm desirable models of community life (Enekwe, Ossie, "Myth, Ritual and Drama in Igbo land" in Ogunbiyi, Y. (ed.) *Drama and Theatre in Nigeria* 1981: 158)

The kind of performance which Enekwe refers to was about the life of the people in African communities. Whatever forms of performance the community engaged in, ranging from song, dance, storytelling or any other form, this was a re-affirmation of the people's way of life. However, this performance was often abandoned during the colonial period:

But it was imperialism that had stopped the free development of the national traditions of theatre rooted in the ritual and ceremonial practices of the peasantry (Ngugi 1986: 41)

In this study I use theatre to refer to all traditional performances found in Swaziland: lullabies, proverbs, riddles, songs, dances, music, praises and folktales. All these have been passed down from generation to generation. I also include new forms of theatre which include life-stories and literary drama. I mainly use 'theatre' in reference to Theatre-for-Development as it is the focus of the study.

Performance in Swaziland has featured in the general life of the people where social practices from pre-colonial times have been carried on to the present day as Ngugi wa Thiong'o also noted "drama in pre-colonial Kenya was not then, an isolated event: it was part and parcel of the rhythm of daily and seasonal life of the community (Ngugi 1997: 37). From pre-colonial times Swazi people have used performance as an educational tool in the continuous socialization of various sectors of society. The educational and entertainment roles of performance have always happened simultaneously, sometimes without any clear distinction: "in performance a woman gets an opportunity to express the private/public dichotomies of conflict" (Dupond-Mkhonza, "Private/ public worlds of conflict: The case of Swazi women's songs" in Dupond-Mkhonza, Sarah T., Vilakati, Joyce N. and Mundia, Lawrence S.J. (eds.) *Democracy, Transformation, Conflict and Public Policy in Swaziland* 2003: 51).

Performance is gendered. Although there have been many changes in general life from the pre-colonial period to the present Swaziland, performance still has its pre-colonial qualities. As a means of control, men perform in ways that are not accessible to women.



As in the other South African countries, “the time and space in which the performance is performed are also paramount” (Sirayi, Mzo “Indigenous African Theatre in South Africa” in Lokangaka Losambe and Devi Sarinjeive, *Pre-colonial and Post-colonial Drama and Theatre in Africa* 2001: 17). Men and boys perform in more public and outdoor spaces, whereas women and children perform in a more private context. This study investigates how women subvert the restrictions of space and time as they venture into what society deems to be for men only.

The subject matter and themes of the performances are also gendered. Men’s narratives are about history, war, hunting, courage and endurance of pain without expression of emotions such as sympathy and love. On the other hand, women’s narratives are about being hard-working, submissive, kind, caring and what Swazi people regard as ‘good’ qualities in women. My discussion pays special attention also to how women subvert the patriarchal themes in their performance, and what is the impact of this on their lives.

All forms of performance in Swaziland tend to be prescriptive, telling people what they have to do in life. They leave very little room, if any, for individuals to make choices and changes in life. The source of the prescriptions is the traditional patriarchal system which Swazi people accords the title, *labadzala* (the elders) who are sometimes ‘faceless’ because even the people whom society regards as elders often talk of *labadzala* whenever some practices are challenged. I regard this behaviour as a way of shifting individual responsibility. Although the mastermind of the system is patriarchy, it uses women to instil patriarchal values. Paulo Freire’s statement about the oppressor and the oppressed explains this:

One of the basic elements of the relationship between the oppressor and oppressed is *prescription*. Every prescription represents the imposition of one individual’s choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber’s consciousness. Thus the behaviour of the oppressed is prescribed behaviour, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor (Freire 1996: 28- 29).

Women activists who have identified the oppressive nature of the culture now utilize performance to struggle and negotiate their way towards the emancipation of women. They rid themselves of the oppressed mentality and start making proclamations that subvert what their oppressors have instilled in them. They are not afraid to claim their freedom:

The oppressed, having internalized the image of the oppressor and adopted his guidelines are afraid of freedom. Freedom would require them to eject this image and replace it with autonomy and responsibility (Freire 1996: 29).

As part of their effort to acquire liberation, women invade some of the genres, times and spaces specifically set aside for men seeking to assume a power they would otherwise be denied and can eventually lead to opportunities for the development of the women. Performing 'makes visible the unseen' challenges the "social and natural order" (Harding 2002: 2).

The role of Swazi women in performance continuously shifts between the condition of 'objectivity,' where they conform to the 'prescriptions' by men and 'subjectivity,' where they take full responsibility for their own lives, deciding what they want for themselves. The latter is not easily attained because of many years of what I have termed internalised oppression. Making visible the unseen is a painstaking process which simultaneously occurs with what Paulo Freire has termed as *conscientisation*.

#### **1.5.7 Conscientisation**

Numerous scholars who are engaged in adult non-formal education and developmental programmes use the term *conscientisation* to refer to the process of change that occurs as the learners or participants of the programmes become aware of their problems, their possible causes, and possible ways of dealing with them. It also extends to taking action by making decisions toward dealing with the problems. *Conscientisation* is not a fixed state that can be reached, but a continuous process in which those pursuing change become aware of themselves, and the various aspects of their lives that have a bearing on the accomplishment of change.

In any situation, as that of the Swazi women, it is easy for people become accustomed to their hard life and even develop feelings of resistance towards change. They develop a fear of change, whether or not it is for their betterment. They find it hard to welcome change. In the case of Swaziland where you often hear people saying statements such as; *sibahle sinje* (we are okay/ beautiful like this) and *sidla ngaloludzala tsine* (we are eating/ enjoying our olden ways). The majority of people dread change. Attaining change calls for the process of *conscientisation*, which “reveals their own fear of freedom” (Freire 1972: 15).

The term ‘*conscientization*’ refers to learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality (Freire 1972: 15).

*Conscientisation* disturbs the accepted social order in any given situation because it “helps people to identify and understand their problems within the context of a particular social order” (Byram, Martin and Moitse, Frances, “Theatre as an Educational Tool for Extension Work: A Training Strategy’ 1985: 81). More often than not, the new experience of understanding that the people get through *conscientisation* may not be accepted in the oppressive social order that prevails. This process becomes possible when the participants of a programme engage in dialogue and interrogate their world. To this Paulo Freire explains:

Dialogue further requires an intense faith in man, faith in his power to make and remake, to create and re-create, faith in his vocation to be more fully human... And that rebirth can occur – not gratuitously, but in and through the struggle for liberation... (Freire 1972: 63)

Notably, Freire uses gender specific language, but what he describes as a process of making and re-making of life is revolutionary and unacceptable where people think they are content to remain the way they are. It calls for the people to “take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire 1972: 17). This *révolution* is a communal action by the participants and it entails transformation as Zakes Mda propounds:

*Conscientisation* therefore is a process of dialogue which enables the individual to transform himself [sic] in relation to his fellows and to act critically towards himself and society... It involves the active participation of the people in transforming themselves by engaging in a dialogue through which they identify their problems, reflect on why the problems exist, and then take action to solve the problems (Mda 1993: 45)

*Conscientisation* is not only concerned with the changes that occur in oppressed people as a result of participating in developmental programmes, but also with the change that occurs in the Theatre-for-Development practitioners. Both practitioners and participants learn from one another. This effects a transformation in both. When this occurs, true and meaningful learning or development takes place (Freire 1972). This, of course is a challenging undertaking for practitioners, who rarely refer to their own *conscientisation* as an important element in the process, yet in Freire's opinion it is as valuable to the practitioners as it is to their learners, the people in the communities. The *conscientisation* process that Paulo Freire advocates is its core aspect.

### **1.6 Theorising Theatre-for-Development**

During the colonial period, African countries experienced a phase in which African indigenous theatre practices were sidelined and western-style theatre introduced. Then when most African countries gained their independence from colonial rule, there emerged a further new kind of theatre, 'travelling theatre'. This 'travelling theatre' started from some African universities, and was an attempt to move from the westernized performances which alienated the majority of ordinary people. The new theatrical trends were voiced in the languages of the people and involved indigenous performances:

One of the most highly organized experiments was the Makerere Free Travelling Theatre in Uganda (1965). [Its aim was] to pioneer popular drama among the general public...varied in language, cultural background and complexity... to fit in almost any performance situation (Kerr, David, *African Popular Theatre: from pre-colonial times to the present Day* 1995: 138).

Taking theatre *from* local universities *to* people through 'travelling theatre,' spread out to many other universities including the University of Nairobi in Kenya, the University of Legon in Ghana and University of Malawi. Kerr calls this kind of theatre 'popular', which I find to be a questionable and inappropriate label because what is 'popular' is

what is found among the majority of ordinary people. In the case of the 'travelling theatre,' this kind of theatre was initiated by a minority, the university lecturers and students. Universities, by virtue of their being places of higher learning are intimidating to the majority of people. During the same period, the early 70s in Zambia, another university based theatre emerged and it was called *Chikwakwa*. Its aim was to produce theatre that appealed to the indigenous Zambian people using their performance arts:

[It aimed] to develop a style of drama that used the dances, songs and music of the rural areas and the urban townships, the masks and the fabulous costumes, the artefacts, the fires and the lamps of traditional story telling (Etherton, Michael "Zambian Popular Theatre" in *New Theatre Magazine* 12/2, 1973: 19-20).

By taking theatre from the universities to the people, the elite from the universities emulated the formal education principle which Paulo Freire challenges and calls the 'banking concept':

In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as a process of enquiry (Freire 1972: 46)

The 'travelling theatre that emerged from the African universities was a positive move toward the African people's reclamation of what they had 'lost' during the colonial era. These forms were "accessible to a large number of people irrespective of class or education, which exploits local, social reality, encourages audience participation, and is expressed in local idioms" (Ndumbe Eyoh 1986: 18). The theatrical forms also boosted the self-esteem of the African people reconciling them with their *roots* as most African people said. Tar Ahuru and Ndumbe Eyoh concur in that the oppressed can challenge the oppressive structures, and that through theatre the oppressed can reclaim a life with dignity:

Popular Theatre "started as praxis for offering challenges to oppressive structures so that human beings can achieve dignity, self-expression, and self-realisation especially

in societies that have suffered heavy fragmentation and class divisions (Ahuru, Tar and Eyoh, Ndumbe *Beyond the Theatre: Interviews Conducted by Hansel Ndumbe Eyoh* 1991: 149).

However good and relevant to the communities the 'travelling theatre' was, what is stated above is as far as the theatre performances could go. The themes in the performances were about the life situations of the people. The themes hailed what was good, ridiculed and criticised what the people deemed wrong and needed correction, but could not go beyond that.

In 1974, a group of university staff based at The University of Botswana initiated an adult education project which involved participatory research, drama, workshops and community discussions. The themes they discussed were of major concern to the people: migrant labour, cattle theft and other development problems experienced by the village people. The project was called *Laedza Batanani*,<sup>5</sup> "which in *Setswana*, means 'The sun is up, let us go and work together'" (Kerr, 1995: 151).

David Kerr explains that the university staff members who initiated *Laedza Batanani* were dissatisfied with the kinds of adult education extension programmes offered to the rural people. They thought using drama would do the work of adult education better than the conventional methods used: "posters, written instructional pamphlets/ seminars" (David Kerr 1995: 151). When *Laedza Batanani* was launched in a campaign it brought together "extension workers, community leaders, performers, teachers and university adult educators" (Kerr 1995: 152).

Dale Byam condemns the *Laedza Batanani* project because its inception was based at The University of Botswana as opposed to communities, but other scholars emphasize its strengths and relevance to community development because it gave priority to the people for whom development was meant through their participation from the inception

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<sup>5</sup> *Laedza Batanani* came from a group of adult educators, including Ross Kidd, Martin Byram, Frank Youngman and Kohler, Adrian associated with the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland (later University of Botswana) (David Kerr 1995: 151)

throughout to the end of the project. She claims “Laedza Batanani emerged as a brainchild of the university staff and had summoned assistance of government ministries for a purpose of addressing apathy” (1999: 44). On the other hand Michael Etherton reveals that the project aimed at the participation of the people:

*Laedza* campaign techniques have always been concerned with showing extension workers - in health, agriculture, education and co-operatives – how they can use theatre for community and village renewal programmes. The focus in the campaigns has been on participation and self-reliance, with the Freireian objective of motivating people to improve their lives through improving the life of the community (Etherton, Michael, *The Development of African Drama* 1982: 344).

Etherton’s account of *Laedza Batanani* shows that it was successful in involving the people in the data collection process, where the people were the ones who brought up the problems to be addressed. These could be addressed by means of the performance arts accessible to the people such as “the singing and the dancing” (Etherton, 1982: 344-345). The *Laedza Batanani* project provided a possible framework for the use of performance as a means of addressing the interests of the communities it intended to serve. Some scholars regard *Laedza Batanani* as one of the early implementation of Theatre-for-Development as a tool for community development.

Ross Kidd, an adult educationalist, based at the University of Botswana during the inception of *Laedza Batanani* states that the parameters of developmental theatre need to include its being a tool for educating communities about their own world because, through theatre, communities can critique their own lives and make necessary transformations. This is theatre “which is applied to cultural / educational activities in which the popular classes present and critique their own understanding of the world in relation to a broader aim of structural transformation” (Kidd 1980: 280).

Kidd states that this kind of theatre can be used to challenge social structures where some members of the communities live under oppression. He says that through theatre the oppressed can transform themselves from feelings of passivity and helplessness to search for ways of altering the oppressive structures:

The starting point then is developing active challenges to the structures and this must start with the oppressed re-evaluating their own understanding of reality, overcoming their fears, their views of the oppressor as all-powerful, of themselves as passive objects of fate and recognising the possibility of structural change (Kidd 1980: 291).

The definition of Theatre-for-Development that Kidd gives is limited in that it advocates for a theatre which enables people to unravel and critique their world, but does not go beyond that. Its efforts recognise that some change may be desirable, but there is no further attempt to move towards the change.

The theatre defined by the scholars above has been practiced in many countries of Africa and its aim is the development of communities, but it has some limitations which make it not to effect the desired change which is the essential element of development. Oga S. Abah makes a statement which concurs with the above assertions, but goes further in that it extends to working out strategies for dealing with the conditions facing the communities involved:

Theatre-for-Development [is] the practice by which theatre is put at the service of the disadvantaged rural and urban poor for the purpose of discussing and working out strategies for dealing with their socio-economic conditions" (Abah 1990: 17).

### **1.7 Setting up a Theatre-for-Development Workshop**

The participation of people in a project that utilizes Theatre-for-Development is an ongoing process. It occurs in phases, starting from the conception of the developmental idea, continuing during the theatre practice and extends to after the performance has been concluded. The conclusion of the performance leads to yet another developmental idea thus ensuring that the struggle of the people to better their lives continues. The Theatre-for-Development workshop includes the phase before the conception of the idea of a workshop; the phase of project conception; the phase of the workshop progress and finally the phase of concluding the workshop and the post workshop phase.

The earliest phase is where someone within or outside the community recognises that a need exists within the community. This leads to the assessment of the needs. In many



cases this is conducted by governments and/or NGOs. Usually governments target communities and use theatre “as an instrument of propaganda to disseminate Government policies to the rural masses” (Frederick Bobor James, *Theatre: How can it be used as a strategy for rural development in Sierra Leone?* 1987: 6), and also to genuinely identify the problems of rural communities in order to engage in projects that would alleviate problems in the lives of the rural communities. The NGOs, on the other hand, may conduct the research studies in order to identify the problems of the communities and therefore participate in solving the problems of the communities. This is mainly done by NGOs which have no special agendas of their own, but whose vocation is to help communities develop themselves. However, there are some NGOs who engage in community development in order to serve their own preconceived agendas.

During the phase of project conception, in Theatre for Development, the catalysts, whether they are governmental or other, engage in dialogue with the communities to discuss the prevailing situation and come to an agreement that there is indeed a need to address the situation. This phase varies according to the community. In some, this phase involves community leaders and other key figures within the communities, together with the project sponsors and theatre practitioners. In others, all the community members are involved in the discussions and decisions to be made thereafter. Jumai Ewu emphasises:

The success of any Theatre-for-Development project depends largely on the effectiveness of contacts and lines of communication established between practitioners and communities before, during and after a particular intervention (Ewu 1999: 88).

This Theatre-for-Development tool derives its theory and practice from the philosophy of Paulo Freire which he propounds in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The Freireian program of adult literacy aimed at raising critical consciousness of the people. Similarly, as a practice it reflects the elements of Freireian critical pedagogy which leads to transforming the adult learners from their fatalistic docility and passivity to assertive action. It breaks the boundary between the spectator and the actor in a similar manner to the blurring of the Freireian dividing line between the teacher and the student.

Penina Mlama critiques the kind of theatre that aims at 'information dissemination' only as a way of pursuing development. People should participate in their development action by analysing their situation to identify the benefits of their participation:

Information alone is in most cases not enough to create the kind of consciousness essential for lasting and high quality participation of people in development action. Awareness also needs to be critical so as to enable people to assess and analyse the advantages and disadvantages of their participation in development programmes (Mlama, Penina, *Culture and Development* 1991: 207)

In her foreword to Oga S. Abah's report on *Case Studies of Theatre-for-Development* Frances Harding draws a distinction between community theatre which "sought to be entertaining and to inculcate a sense of belonging" and one which did more and was:

...Centred on the creation of dialogue drama which, whilst entertaining, was primarily analytical. This was its great break with the Community Theatre movement and remains its distinctive feature distinguishing it from other forms of entertainment which may criticise, but do not analyse (Abah, *Case Studies of Theatre for Development* 1997: xi)

Harding emphasises that Theatre-for-Development also has the ability to draw "on existing forms of performance within a given community" (ibid) but does more than that. She highlights the ways in which Theatre for Development supersedes the former practice:

If the concern of Community Theatre has rarely addressed social change in its brief, Theatre for Development has at its centre a concern for the future, for development. Theatre for Development is a technique of drama-building which rest [sic] on an interaction between people who are in the flight path of development projects and those who initiate development (Harding, in Abah 1997: xii).

Communities are not static and they undergo various changes in their experience, which have a bearing on the contexts that determine the focus of each practice. Frances Harding adds that the distinctive feature of Theatre-for-Development is that it goes beyond making the participants *aware* of certain issues and extends to enabling them *take action*. The process of development is at the heart of Theatre-for-Development, and it is a dynamic process which requires change to take place. Abah highlights the dynamism of

Theatre-for-Development and its significance in implementing change, and states “All over the world, whenever Theatre-for-Development is practiced it defines itself as an alternative practice; and the agenda it pursues always is that of change” (Abah 2002: 158).

Ewu elucidates that as the name of the practice pronounces, Theatre-for-Development is “about two things: it is about theatre and it is about development. It is about putting theatre at the service of development” (Jumai Ewu, *Theatre Development: A Digest of Experiences* 2002: 3). As a device meant to serve, it “draws on the performance traditions of grassroots communities, whatever these may be, as the intention is not to impose any particular form and uses these in new ways” (Ewu 2002: 4). Emeldor Ngufor Samba adds that in Theatre for Development, local cultural values and practices become the point of departure from which to define the kind of development that is needed to improve the life in the community and the means by which it should be affected (Samba 2005).

The use of cultural values within practice gives the participants confidence in what they are doing. It removes the intimidation that prevails where external alienating theatre forms are used. The people feel ‘at home’ and have a strong sense of belonging. Whatever the challenging situations and issues they address within the practice become approachable because the people feel ‘at home.’ The empowerment they get from their familiarity with the performance form extends to other areas of their life and they become confident that they can deal with other situations never attempted before. They also become aware of what their genuine limitations are. Jenkeri Zakari Okwori articulates this explicitly:

Empowerment involves development power with and within the people. This power emanates from awareness, from the knowledge of one’s capacities, resources, limitations and challenges. Once a people gain or regain power, they are able to resist and destroy the conditions that dis-empower them (Okwori, Jenkeri Zakari, “Popular Theatre, Popular Participation and Empowerment” in Ewu, Jumai, (ed.) *Theatre Development: A Digest of Experiences* 2002: 161)

People become free to challenge areas they had previously viewed as being 'off limits' because "Theatre for Development has opened discussion on topics that have long been considered taboo (Samba 2005: 25). As the people engage in post-performance discussions they discover more about themselves, which leads them to search for further alternatives to pursue the development they desire. This way the people become key negotiators.

This change of attitude and a raised self esteem which result in the people believing that they are capable of dealing with issues on their own as opposed to looking to external agents to bring developmental changes in their lives manifests itself in the introduction of more projects at community level with or without external assistance. This may also result in material development as the people discover through the dialogue and exchange of ideas within the Theatre-for-Development practice ways of making their lives better. Jumai Ewu affirms that there is a "symbiotic relationship between material and human development which Theatre-for-Development advocates... to reinforce the call for closer collaboration between Theatre-for- Development and development agencies" (1999: 88).

Just as Paulo Freire campaigns for a non formal education in which the educator and the learners engage in a dialogue arguing that dialogue places both educator and learners at a position of equality, and enabling both parties to pose questions that make them active in the education process. He poses a rhetorical question to emphasise his point:

How can I enter dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and never perceive my own? ...At the point of encounter there are neither utter ignoramuses nor perfect sages; there are only men [sic] who are attempting, together, to learn more than they know (Freire 1972: 63)

When collaborative dialogue occurs, transformations occur. In a Theatre-for-Development practice the transformations happen as participants articulate their opinions within the Theatre-for-Development practice in a way that sometimes blurs the dividing line between performance and real life situations. Harding confirms the occurrence of such transformations within a practice and states, "at such transformative moments

Theatre-for-Development achieves fulfilment in empowering people through their personal experiences” (1998: 16).

Freire asserts that through dialogue, a revolution can take place; “revolution is made neither by the leaders for the people, nor by the people for the leaders, but by both acting together in unshakable solidarity” (Freire 1972: 100). Theatre-for-Development makes the people not to be passive spectators, but rather become “participant-spectator” which is a process of development where the rural poor are not passive, but assume a dual role of being spectators, and also take part as actors and actresses in the performance. This marks a continuous and non-breaking experience and participation of the people in the workshop. The people’s dual roles guarantee that they feel a sense of belonging to the Theatre-for-Development performance process. They do not feel left out, but work hand in hand with the theatre practitioner in a more meaningful way than they would where they were mere spectators.

The role of the theatre practitioner in Theatre-for-Development becomes even more important during the project progress phase because that is when performance occurs. Most of the theatre scholars, who have participated in Theatre-for-Development either through research, or in the projects, concur that the people, as beneficiaries of Theatre-for-Development need to actively participate even during the performance. This kind of participation goes beyond simply being spectators, watching a play in whose making they did not participate. In Theatre for Development, during the making of the performance, the theatre practitioner collaborates with the people and makes a story line which resembles real life situations of the community. Frances Harding calls this the “Freireian - Boalian paradigm of fictionalising and dramatising, which lead ideally to action in real life” (Harding 1998: 5). She asserts that this quality of Theatre-for-Development if exploited well is strength:

The collaboration of the theatre practitioner and people becomes an “interactive process utilising reality and fiction to create the experience of performing” (Harding 1988: 19). In the process of the people’s active involvement, as “participant – spectators” (ibid) the

people gain for themselves some empowerment denied them if they are only spectators in a ready-made performance.

As the participants of the Theatre-for-Development practice improvise, they become aware of their world which leads to the outcome intervention. This does not just happen, but “participation raises awareness which can in turn lead to intervening in the process” (Abah 2002: 69). Abah states that the participants within the practice undergo a transformation that results from their becoming aware of what their world comprises as they discover that their own problems are not unique, and others within their community face similar problems. Together, the people identify possible ways of dealing with their problems:

In developing critical awareness a whole new range of other knowledges emerge: individuals within the group come to understand that their problems are similar to one another, that their life experiences are common, and that they generally belong in the same category in society. A sense of collective belonging and cooperative action may consequently result (Abah 2002: 160).

This aspect of theatre production cannot be experienced when people are spectators in an externally prepared, managed and performed theatre such as travelling theatre. In this kind of theatre practice, passivity is minimised by the developmental and transformative potential of the project.

Effective progressive participation occurs when the people have control over the theatre process. This cannot occur where people have no voice in the decision making process. If the people are only spectators they are not in control. Sometimes people can be ‘compelled to perform or assume roles someone else forces on them. They may perform story lines chosen for them by others, but all this does not give them control. For control, people need to have the power to accept and refuse any aspect of the construction and creation of the drama. The storylines and roles must develop according to *their* judgements and out of *their* own will. If they are not enabled to make choices in their theatre, their participation in the process remains substantially passive.

Attaining full and dynamic participation calls for all those involved in the practice to collectively confront challenges that hinder participation. Such challenges invariably include prevailing social structures:

The challenge we face is to develop not only participatory mechanisms of empowerment but the means to overcome the structured inequalities in social power. These structured differences in participation apply to the many categories of social hierarchy and oppression – relating to class, colour, religion, nationality, physical well-being, and sexual orientation (Kaufman, Michael and Alfonso Haroldo Dilla, *Community Power and Grassroots Democracy: the transformation of social life* 1997: 153).

The oppressive social structures that prevail in some communities tend to hold back community development projects even when the theatre practitioners and community members attempt to engage in and aim to give full ‘ownership’ of the project to the communities.

Paulo Freire proposes that people who believe that they have no right to any choices in life, and therefore have no way out of their problematic situation, can be assisted through engaging in dialogue with them. These are people who were brought up in a “culture of silence [where] the masses are ‘mute’ [and] prohibited from taking part in transformation of their society” (Freire, 1970: 13). To engage in dialogue with these ‘internally oppressed’ people is not easy, and it requires sensitive negotiation for them to realise that it is possible to make their own choices in life:

They will ultimately recognize that, as men [sic], they have the right to have a voice ...gradually, hesitatingly, and timorously place in doubt the opinion they held of reality and replace it with a more critical knowledge thereof (Freire 1970: 13, 16).

In most communities where people are brought up in a ‘culture of silence,’ it is impossible to even *talk* about certain issues of life. People do not refer openly to aspects of culture that are clearly oppressive because they fear society. Therefore, in Theatre-for-Development, the theatre practitioner works with the people to eventually discuss such issues. The theatre practitioner enables people to identify the main issues about which

they are concerned. Together - the practitioner and the people – create a narrative. Each time they develop the story, each participant can make suggestions.

### **1.8 Structure of the thesis**

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Each begins with an introduction which outlines the main areas of consideration, ends with a summary and sets out the next chapter. Chapter 1 introduces the thesis. Chapter 2 is divided into four: a profile of Swaziland, its historical background, the social structure and the cultural practices of the people. Chapter 3 examines the forms of performance in Swaziland and their role in the development of women. Chapter 4 examines the literary tradition in Swaziland; the presentation of women in the literary works H.I.E. Dhlomo, a South African pioneer of English playwriting; Hilda Kuper, an anthropologist who worked among Swazi people from the 1940s to the 70s and Zodwa Motsa a contemporary Swazi woman writer. Chapters 5, and 6 examine the evolution of Theatre-for-Development workshops among Swazi from those organized and presented to communities by the government or organizations to those created by communities (or sections of them) and performed *with* and *for* them. Chapter 7 is a conclusion.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

# **Swaziland: Overview, Historical Background and Social Structure**

### **2.0 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to give the historical background of Swaziland by highlighting the important historical events which contributed to the status of Swazi women. These events include the expansion of the country by King Mswati II and events following the colonial period which led to loss of part of the land. I discuss Swazi kinship, clans, social structure and cultural values, focusing on how these determine the social status of women.

### **2.1 The country's profile**

Swaziland is a small African country with an area of 17, 364 square kilometres (see appendix 1 a). It is landlocked between South Africa and Mozambique and has a climate which varies from tropical to near temperate. Although small, Swaziland is divided into four regions which are well defined according to their geographical status; namely the Highveld<sup>6</sup>, Middleveld<sup>7</sup>, Lowveld<sup>8</sup>, and the Lubombo<sup>9</sup> Plateau (See appendix 1 b). In the 2007 census results the population was estimated to be just less than one million, of whom the majority are Swazi and a minority of other Africans and Europeans. The country's main exports are sugar, wood pulp and minerals. The Gross National Income (GNI) per capita is US \$1,660 (World Bank, 2005). Nevertheless, 66% of the population lives below the poverty line, which raises questions about the distribution of the country's wealth. The staple food of Swaziland is maize, and is eaten along with meat and vegetables. Due to natural disasters, such as drought, self sufficiency has declined and

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<sup>6</sup> The highveld is the mountainous part of the Swaziland which is mainly suitable and therefore used for growing coniferous trees such as pine, gum or wattle trees.

<sup>7</sup> The middleveld is the fertile part of the country that has moderate climatic conditions suitable for farming.

<sup>8</sup> The lowveld is the part of Swaziland with the driest and almost tropical climatic conditions, but the soil there is fertile and agriculture is made possible through irrigation.

<sup>9</sup> Lubombo is the name of the plateau in the eastern part of Swaziland, separating the country from Mozambique and part of the Kwa-Zulu-Natal province of South Africa.

about 270,000 people rely on the World Food Program. Education has improved at all levels since independence in 1968, and 25% of the national budget goes to this sector. The government has a programme of providing universal health care, with treatment at all government-run medical centres heavily subsidised (Swaziland Government Development Plan 2003). According to the UN report on Swaziland, the country has the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the world at over 40 % (Statistics department of Swaziland). The number of orphans in the country is continuously rising as are child-headed families. As a result, the non-formal education sector in the country currently focuses on HIV/AIDS education. In this, as in all the problems facing the country, women suffer the most, mainly because of the social structures and cultural practices of the country. Swaziland operates a dual legal system, derived from Roman-Dutch law, which is written down and customary law which is not written down:

Roman-Dutch common law is the common law of the territory but in civil matters Swazi law may be followed where necessary, administered by the Swazi courts, which also deal with common law offences not specifically excluded from their jurisdiction, many of which are also offences against Swazi law and custom (Central office of information 1968: 20).

Most people understand and follow customary law.

## **2.2 Historical background of Swaziland**

Like many African countries, Swaziland as a separate polity is not very old. The present day Swazi people descend from the Bantu peoples who migrated from central Africa during the 15th and 16th centuries. They moved southwards together with other Nguni speakers including the Xhosa and the Zulu:

...the Swazi, led by Dlamini's descendants, remained for over two hundred years in what is now southern Mozambique, in the region of Maputo (Booth, Alan, *Swaziland: Tradition and Change in a Southern African Kingdom* 1983: 7).

When the Swazi settled in present day Swaziland about 1750, they were led by Ngwane III who led his people across the Lubombo Mountains,<sup>10</sup> settled in the region of the Pongolo River, and absorbed the Nguni and Sotho clans in the area. For this reason the people of Swaziland consider Ngwane III to be their first king, and they call their country *kaNgwane* (the place of Ngwane). When addressing a number of people collectively, Swazi people use the phrase *nine bakaNgwane* (you of Ngwane). Ngwane died in 1780 and *Liqoqo*<sup>11</sup> ruled before his son Ndvungunye started reigning in 1815. Ndvungunye was succeeded by Sobhuza I in 1839 (Booth 1983: 8). Sobhuza I reigned during dangerous times: the era of the *Mfecane*<sup>12</sup> (ibid). Other powerful rulers in the area included Zwide of the Ndwandwe clan who was the most feared. The success of Sobhuza I was gained by a "mixing of force, political skill, diplomacy, guile and bluster" (Booth 1983: 9). Sobhuza I married Zwide's daughter, Thandile (Tsandzile in *SiSwati*<sup>13</sup>), made her his chief wife, and later also "sent two of his own daughters to the Zulu king, Shaka" (ibid). Swazi *timbongi* (praise poets) tell of how Sobhuza I moved to the north of the country to avoid confrontation with the powerful Zwide. He withdrew to the Ezulwini Valley and established his headquarters at Lobamba<sup>14</sup> in the central part of present-day Swaziland.

To his people, Sobhuza I was an excellent king who had mysterious experiences and as a result they called him *Somhlolo*, 'the man of wonders.' He is mainly remembered for his dream or vision in which he saw "white- skinned people with hair like tassels of tails of cattle" (Matsebula, J.S.M.<sup>15</sup>, *A history of Swaziland* 1987: 27). These people had two

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<sup>10</sup> The Dlamini clan praises have a clause which states that King Dlamini led his people across the Lubombo Plateau.

<sup>11</sup> *Liqoqo* is a *Siswati* term that refers to the board comprising of royal and other respectable people in Swaziland who rule in the land after the death of a king before the coronation of the next king.

<sup>12</sup> Mfecane is the period when wars broke out as the Zulu expanded their kingdom during Shaka's time. Most of the kings in this region of Africa were warriors either protecting their kingdoms or expanding them.

<sup>13</sup> *Siswati* is the language of the Swazi people.

<sup>14</sup> Lobamba is the traditional capital of Swaziland to this day, and that is where the Somhlolo National Stadium and other national buildings such as the national church and houses of parliament are located.

<sup>15</sup> J.S.M. Matsebula is the very first writer of books in the *Siswati* language, when the language was introduced into the curriculum in 1969. He is also the first Swazi to write a detailed history of the Swazi people, and Philip Bonner declares, "Only Matsebula gives an account centred firmly on the Swazi themselves (1982: 3).

things: *likinobho* (button)<sup>16</sup>, and *umculu* (book)<sup>17</sup>. *Likinobho* was on the left hand side and *umculu*, on the right hand side. In his dream, King Somhlolo was advised to choose the book, as opposed to the button. Later Swazi people interpreted the button to be money and the book to be the Bible and education. When King Somhlolo died, his son, Mswati II, became the next king and his newly widowed, principal wife, Tsandile, became the Queen Mother.

### 2.2.1 Expansion of the country by King Mswati II

The country derives its name, Swaziland, (Mswazi's land) from Somhlolo's son King Mswati II<sup>18</sup>, a warrior who established his people as a "strong military force" (Bonner, Philip, *Kings, Commoners and Concessionaires: The Evolution and Dissolution of the Nineteenth- Century Swazi State* 1982: 211). He was successful in expanding the nation by making considerable territorial conquests of the South East African occupants, the Shangan and Sotho and enlarged his country to an area three times the size of the present-day state. King Mswati II was persuaded by his mother, Thandile (LaZwide<sup>19</sup>) to "Adopt the Ndwandwe institution of nationwide age regiments, cutting across local boundaries and kinship loyalties to focus loyalty on the king" (Booth 1983: 10).

This focus on the king was a legacy that was to remain with the Swazi people for generations to come. I discuss this further in the section on Swazi monarchy. King Mswati II also brought his people together through *kukhonta*<sup>20</sup>:

Many of the conquered Sotho clans gave allegiance to the earlier kings (*ukukhonta*) and assumed Swazi nationality. At the present time, aliens may, with the permission of the paramount chief, settle in Swaziland and assume Swazi nationality (Marwick,

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<sup>16</sup> The button indicated a money coin which was later introduced into Swaziland by traders and missionaries.

<sup>17</sup> The book indicated the Bible which was introduced by missionaries.

<sup>18</sup> Mswati in Zulu is Mswazi which means a Swazi or *Swati* person, so the country got its name Swaziland from the Zulu dialect Swazi as opposed to the *Swati* one because the first white settlers found Zulu easier to speak than Siswati.

<sup>19</sup> LaZwide means the daughter of Zwide. It was a normal thing as it still is in Swaziland for a woman to be called by her father's name with the prefix 'la'.

<sup>20</sup> *Kukhonta* is the Swazi custom of going to a king or chief and asking to be admitted to be one of that king's or chief's subjects if you are not of their kingdom or chieftdom.

Brian Allan, *The Swazi: An Ethnographic Account of the Natives of the Swaziland Protectorate* 1940: 8).

According to Matsebula, "It was during King Mswati II's reign that the groups of white skinned people, seen by Somhlolo in his vision, the 'Dutch emigrants' emigrated into the northern Swazi kingdom" (Matsebula 1988: 49). Led by Potgieter, they asked permission to settle in Swaziland from King Mswati. "Mswati-in-council accordingly permitted Potgieter's group to settle permanently in his country." (Matsebula 1988: 49)

To signify their gratitude materially the Dutch-settlers paid one hundred head of cattle, which was in accordance with the Swazi custom of paying tributes. This was in 1846 (Matsebula 1988: 50).

The white settlers on the other hand thought they were *paying* the king and they documented this payment, but according to Swazi custom, land can neither be bought nor sold, because it belongs to the nation. The king owns land and everyone within the country is allocated land to use for survival. This misunderstanding between the settlers and the Swazi king soon led to the loss of large parts of Swazi land to the settlers.

### **2.2.2 The advent of colonialism: transition up to the time of Sobhuza II**

When King Mswati II died, he was succeeded by his son Mbandzeni after the mysterious death of Ludvonga who was the heir to the throne. Mbandzeni was chosen as a compromise to settle disputes among the royal family, "less for his exceptional qualities than for his exceptional lack of them" (Booth 1983: 11). The misunderstanding over land purchase worsened during Mbandzeni's reign. Many white people acquired substantial Swazi land through 'concessions'.

### **2.2.3 Concessions**

Swazi people had plenty of food, for they are both agricultural and pastoral, had sufficient cattle and agriculturally favourable conditions to ensure a good life for them. They have maintained this, and "land is the basis of Swazi livelihood" (Kuper, Hilda, *An African*

*Aristocracy: Rank among the Swazi* 1961: 35). The land in which the Swazi nation was established was naturally fertile and very conducive to farming.

The area on which the Swazi people alighted “was well suited to their mixed agricultural and pastoral way of life...it boasted particularly desirable configurations of natural resources. Year round grazing was possible, and the basin of the Ngwavuma River allowed for easy cultivation of fertile riverbanks... cattle and human population multiplied accordingly, especially in the late eighteenth century (Bonner 1982: 208).

The natural beauty of Swaziland, its fertile soil and mineral wealth drew the attention of fortune seekers from Britain. Upon arrival in the country, one of these fortune seekers, Allister Miller wrote his testament of the encounter, confirming that, what was before his eyes was a special ‘discovery’, which could not be easily abandoned:

The advantages peculiar to Swaziland may be concisely put as follows: first, uniformly rich soil in the low veld, good average soil, particularly rich areas in the middle veld, and a green winter grass in the highlands: second, three fourths of the country is suitable for European settlement...The bright mining and farming prospects of Swaziland are the main incentives which have led to our persistent struggles to keep the country open for European development (Miller, Allister, ‘Swaziland: Its Agricultural and Pastoral Future’, Reprinted from *Transvaal Agricultural Journal* 1906: 22).

Miller’s perspective on ‘European development’ gives no indication that there were people already occupying the land.

In the view of Miller and his kindred spirits, Swaziland could not have been designed with the African in mind. It had to be saved for the white race since it was so precious (Simelane, Nomthetho, *Social Transformation: The Swaziland Case* 1995: 17).

After this, ‘fortune hunters’ flocked in their hundreds to Swaziland during the 1880’s: “At about the same time as the Boers were invading Swaziland, British fortune seekers were attracted by the mineral finds of gold and tin” (ibid).

...the rush to obtain concessions in the 1880s which followed the discovery of gold in Swaziland in 1879, and the use by the Transvaal farmers of the Highveld for winter grazing for their sheep led to European settlement" (Fair, T.J.D., Murdoch G., and Jones H.M., *Development in Swaziland: a regional analysis* 1969: 24).

This also led to the eventual loss of political independence in Swaziland and a large portion of Swazi land was lost. Eventually:

Two thirds of Swaziland was given to the white concessionaries with the remaining one third allocated to the Swazi nation through the passing of the 1907 Concession Partition Proclamation (Hailey, Lord, *An African Survey: A Study of Problems Arising in Africa South of the Sahara*. 1938: 400).

The loss of land led to other problems, particularly to that of enforced labour. The Swazi people now found they were living on land that belonged to the white settlers and were given an ultimatum to either evacuate the land or stay as labourers:

The result was that after 1914, one quarter of Swaziland's 100, 000 black population was forced into settler farmer labour service – as most farmers wanted to (Bongani Nsibande, "Historical perspectives on the Proletarianisation Process in Swaziland" in Simelane, Nomthetho (ed.) *Social Transformation: The Swaziland Case* 1995: 5).

Men and women, accustomed to farming for their own consumption, now had to work for the farmers who owned the land they occupied. Some of the people, whose homes were not within the new farms, were left with rocky patches of land, unsuitable for farming. The produce from these bits of the land was not enough for survival.

In 1889, King Mbandzeni died, heavily laden with the troubles in his country from the influx of European settlers interested in the minerals in Swaziland and the Boer farmers from the Transvaal. The next monarch was "Gwamile Mdluli (Labotsibeni), a woman of extraordinary wisdom and ability" (Booth 1983: 15). She was succeeded by her son, Ngwane V. In 1899 Ngwane V died "broken and dissolute during the war" (Booth 1983: 17). After the king's death, his mother, Labotsibeni, acted as Queen Regent.

#### **2.2.4 Enforced Taxes**

As Queen Regent, Labotsibeni had the responsibility of restoring and maintaining order in the country. After the country became a British Protectorate, taxes were imposed on Swazi men, a previously unknown concept to the Swazi people. Already in 1894, there had been the “introduction of a native hut tax” (Kuper 1961: 28), but “the imposition of tax reacted more directly on the relation of chief and subject” (Kuper 1961: 7). The chiefs, as smaller rulers under the king and queen, felt their power was being snatched away from them. Swazi people knew only to give *tetfulo* (gifts of loyalty to the king or chiefs), not the strange taxes.

According to Kuper, in an effort to fight the Europeans and get back the lost Swazi nation land, Queen Gwamile wanted to fight the white people with their own weapons, ‘money and books’ (Kuper 1961: 31), and quickly began the struggle. Gwamile encouraged her people to work and earn money in order to buy back the lost Swazi land.

#### **2.2.5 Migrant labour**

The land situation in Swazi homes became desperate. Due to land loss and a shift from productive to unproductive land, most of the men had to go to work in mines in The Republic of South Africa<sup>21</sup> and this labour migration had negative effects on the country because all the work which had been previously done by men was left in the hands of women and children. Even when the men were there, the women had had a lot of work to do but it now became a double burden.

The majority of those going for migrant labour in South Africa were young men at their prime working age and nothing could be done while the headman was away – marriages were held over...wait till he returns...sometimes they never returned (Nsibande 1995: 7).

Family life became even more difficult for the women as they had to work hard on their own for the upkeep of the household, but had to wait for the men to return before making major family decisions:

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<sup>21</sup> South Africa used to be called The Republic of South Africa.



The social effect depended on [the man's] status. Nothing could be done while the headman was away – marriages were held over...A woman may wait months before money arrives from the man in the unknown, distant city (Kuper, Hilda, *The Uniform of Colour: A Study of White-Black Relationships in Swaziland* 1947: 151)

Life became abnormal in society as “between 40% and 50% of the male Swazi population was in South Africa between 1907 and 1940” (Simelane, 1995: 28). That meant “for the better part of the year the husbands and sons were away, either in South Africa or in urban areas of Swaziland” (Simelane 1995: 32).

Another reason why men had to go to work was that the general lifestyle of the people gradually changed. There was a demand for money in the homesteads to buy commodities which had rapidly turned into basic needs in almost every homestead:

Swazi dependence upon their own production of grain was replaced by their partial-dependence upon supplies from external sources, and through European traders, whose scattered stores were minor points of contact with the cash economy” (Fair, Murdoch, and Jones 1969: 30).

Simelane confirms this dependence, but interprets it as a loss, because instead of adding the new products into their old, existing ones, the Swazi people abandoned their old ways of living for the new:

The pre-capitalist Swazi socio-economic formation was completely transformed by capitalist penetration from a self-sufficient, food-producing society to a dependent non-developing socio- economic formation” (Simelane 1995: 22).

The change of lifestyle was not however only in the form of goods the people started using. More serious change was kindled in their perception of themselves and their own culture. This more powerful change was promoted by the influence of missionaries.

#### **2.2.6 Missionaries and religion in Swaziland**

Before missionaries came to Swaziland, Swazi people already had their own religion. The Swazi religion, incorporated ancestors and *Mvelinchante* (the one who was there from the

beginning of everything), and his messenger *Mlentengamunye* (the one-legged one), who was said to have been seen by some women. Kuper says both characters were associated with God for Swazi people believed that God could be accessed via the ancestors, who were seen as closer to God by virtue of their having left the world of the living.

The Swazi monarchy played a very important and leading role in the Swazi traditional religion, through the main ritual, *Incwala*<sup>22</sup> (first fruits) ceremony (See appendix 2). The Swazi people regard this ceremony as their national prayer to the ancestors. The king takes the leading role in the *Incwala* ritual:

Thus in the field of religion the rulers appeal to their ancestors on behalf of the entire nation, on the same principle by which the head of each homestead appeals to his own ancestors on behalf of related dependants (Kuper 1950: 86)

On a smaller, family, scale, the leaders in every homestead emulated the religious role the monarch played in national religious matters. The leaders in each homestead performed religious rituals within the homestead:

The clan is important too as far as religious observances are concerned. The head of the clan is the proper intermediary between the living and the dead members of the clan, and will make the sacrifices and say the praises of the dead ancestors. The cattle which a man inherits from his father will be regarded as a sacred trust and his son will not willingly dispose of them except to *lobolo* a new wife so that he may beget more children, or sacrifice to his ancestors (Marwick 1940: 58)

The special role of the Swazi monarchy and the family heads in religion was soon threatened by the coming of missionaries whose preaching conflicted with the prevailing practice and who called the traditional practices 'heathen.' Their converts turned against ancestral worship. Converts had to show openly that they were converted from being "heathen" to being Christian. Women, who were the ones most frequently converted to the new beliefs and lifestyle had their names and those of their children changed from

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<sup>22</sup> *Incwala* is the first fruits ceremony, which also serves as a traditional religious ritual that is performed by the Swazi king and his people at the time when the king bites the first fruit of the new year's produce. See also, chapter 3.



*SiSwati* to either Biblical or European names. Their style of dressing had to be changed too<sup>23</sup> (See appendix 3 a). However, the missionaries proved sympathetic to the women who endured subjugation in their traditional beliefs. A few men were converted, and they also had to accept similar features of change (See appendix 3 b).

### 2.2.7 Missionaries, Language and Culture in Swaziland

Missionaries greatly contributed in the establishment and development of education in the country by building schools, but there were some conflicts that emanated from their coming into the country. They were from different countries, and in addition to implanting the Christian faith they also promoted the interests and cultures of their home countries:

The Wesleyans established their first mission in southern Swaziland in the 1840s, followed by the Anglicans in the 1870s, the German Lutherans in the 1880s, and the South African (Dutch Reformed) and Scandinavian Alliance missions in the 1890s. The Roman Catholics arrived in 1914 and in the 1920s the American Nazarene Mission established a major presence in Swaziland, creating churches, schools, and health facilities, most notably the Raleigh Fitkin hospital in Manzini (Booth 1983: 50-51).

The early missionaries did not understand Swazi culture or language. They encouraged their converts to abandon everything Swazi. Most missionaries found it easier to speak Zulu than *SiSwati*, because Zulu was the language spoken by a majority of Southern African people.

Although the various missionary groups, listed by Booth, were from different backgrounds, they often had the English language in common. When it was introduced it became the language of 'civilization.' To the Swazi converts who could not speak English, Zulu became a church language in an attempt to emulate the missionaries who

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<sup>23</sup> *Sidvuvaba* (Swazi women's traditional black leather skirts) and *mahiya/ mhelwane* (colourful red, orange or maroon cloth) were abandoned for dresses and skirts. An example of this transformation is evidenced by C.C. Watts' book illustration of the Swazi people's conversion into Christianity, in which he has a photograph of a girl in a western dress and another in traditional clothes. The point of his photograph is to illustrate the contrast between a Swazi Christian girl and another Swazi girl whom he labels 'heathen' by means of clothes. He regards the girl in western clothes as a Christian and the one in Swazi traditional clothes as a heathen (Watts, C.C., *Dawn in Swaziland* 1922: 73).

could speak Zulu. The converts spoke Zulu in the church meetings, as well as outside church. The Bible and hymn books were the main books read by the converts, who found themselves abandoning their *SiSwati* language for Zulu, and where possible, English.

When the missionaries came, they ignored Swazi and translated everything - hymns, the Bible, and the school books – into Zulu alone” (Ncongwane, S.D., “Languages Spoken in South Africa: An open lecture delivered at the University of Zululand” 1986: 3).

Missionaries also discouraged the converts from singing *SiSwati* traditional songs and dance, calling them ‘heathen’ and ‘about the devil’. The new converts, who had been raised within Swazi culture and had a deep appreciation of the songs and dance found themselves torn between these forces. They lived in conflict within themselves because they no longer had a sense of belonging when they were among the rest of ‘unconverted’ Swazi people.

#### **2.2.8 Civilization and progress**

At the same time, however converts regarded the assumption of new names as a form of progress to a life which they perceived as better than the one they had lived before. Possessing western and Biblical names gave them a sense of belonging to their new faith. Nor was the assumption of western and Biblical names found only among converts, because eventually when sending children to school it became popular to give them a western name as a way of being ‘civilized.’ The converts were the first to appreciate the importance of education. When children were asked what their names were, those who gave *SiSwati* names such as *Lozindaba*, *Sigodvo*, *Tfokotile* had to be given *emagama esikolo* (school names). Owning a western school name was popular, such that those parents who did not know any western names gave their children *SiSwati* names, which sounded more English than the *ligama lekhaya* (home name). Such names included names such as Galina, Jofalina, Keselina, so the ‘civilized’ children ended up owning two names! It was so popular that the name change excitement spread even to those who never went to school.

As elsewhere in Africa generally, the Swazi way of life rapidly became westernized in a number of other ways: the new 'masters' such as Allister Miller, the leader of the settlers, encouraged the eagerness to be 'civilized' among the Swazi, and put great effort into transforming the Swazi people in any way possible. He talked of their chief goals for the "denationalization" and also "detribalization" of the Swazi people. In his opinion the Swazi people "must be freed ...certainly and consistently, from the exclusiveness of tribal life" (Allister Miller's letter to D.O. Malcolm, secretary to Lord Selborne, 21 December 1906):

The "denationalization" of the Swazi in this manner thereafter shaped virtually every aspect - political, economic, and social - of society after 1914 (Booth 1983: 23)

As the drastic changes were occurring among the ordinary Swazi people, things were no easier at the national leadership level. Due to the scramble for land between the Boers and British, the latter assumed the role of 'protector' over Swaziland in 1902, when Labotsibeni was the Queen Regent. When her grandson, Nkhotfotjeni (Sobhuza II) was fifteen she sent him to Lovedale School in the Cape Colony, against the wishes of the council, because she was "adamant and eloquent" (Kuper 1978: 49). She also insisted that three girls go with the boys who accompanied the king to study in Lovedale. This documents a battle for the education of girls, right from the inception of education in the country.

When King Sobhuza II returned from Lovedale College and was installed as king in 1921, one of his priorities was to preserve and promote culture. However, it was difficult because powerful external forces discouraged Swazi culture.

[Sobhuza II] clearly understood that western civilisation had brought on corroding elements on African culture in general. His mission then was to strive for the preservation of the traditional cultural fabric (Mzizi, Joshua<sup>24</sup> "Leadership, Civil Society and Democratisation in Swaziland" in Bujra and Buthelezi (eds.) *Leadership*,

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<sup>24</sup> Dr Joshua Mzizi was a theologian at the University of Swaziland, and also heads the Human Rights Association of Swaziland (HUMARAS), which serves as a watchdog for the upkeep of Human Rights in Swaziland.

King Sobhuza II endeavoured to develop education in the country. He felt that a real school had to be 'a genuine national undertaking and centre for the cultural, social, and industrial development of Swazi people' (Report of the Commission 1932: 66). He then incorporated culture into education:

The Swazi National High School was opened in 1931. Sobhuza II wanted to use this school as an experiment for teaching and inculcating traditional values. The curriculum in this school included the teaching of Swazi history, custom, folklore and traditional law. Traditional dress was accepted as the official uniform in place of the western tunic and trousers worn in missionary schools (Mzizi 2002: 169-170)

The education offered at Swazi National High School (and later, others), revived various Swazi performances, which were not practiced in mission schools so students who went to these national schools soon developed a sense of pride in being Swazi. The ideas of King Sobhuza II and the revitalisation of Swazi culture in the national school curriculum spread. Whenever there were national celebrations the historic performances formed the backbone of the activities. King Sobhuza II died in 1982 at the age of eighty-three years, having been the longest reigning monarch of Swaziland. His successor was his son King Mswati III.

### **2.2.9 Swazi Monarchy**

Swaziland is a dual monarchy. The king and his mother, the queen mother, are the key people in the general life of the people. The king is metaphorically called *ngwenyama* (lion), *imbube* (lion king) or *silo* (beast), as a symbol of majesty (See appendix 4). The queen mother on the other hand is called *indlovukati* (she-elephant) (see appendix 5), also as a sign of greatness: "together, [the two] embody all power - legislative, executive, administrative and religious" (Booth 1983: 44). Marwick considers the king's office as the most significant and compares the Swazi kingdom with the British Empire, and states that the king's role serves:

...to synchronize the symbol of the corporate unity of the Swazi people, in very much the same way that the King of the United Kingdom is a focus for the national spirit of the people of the British Empire...He is the central figure of the nation [and] the *Ingwenyama* is still in force in the affairs of the nation after he is dead, because he passes to the realm of ancestral spirits and continues to influence the life of his tribe [sic] (Marwick 1940: 5)

Swazi people demonstrate their reverence for their kings in both life and death through rituals such as the national *Incwala* ceremony and others such as marriage and death ceremonies. In all these, there is continuous reference to *labadzala* (the elders), which is a term that is inclusive of both living and dead people who are revered as the custodians of Swazi culture and the essence of being Swazi. Rank and protocol are very important in everyday activities of the people.

In Swaziland, life is centred on the monarch. During the time the country was under British rule, the Roman-Dutch Law was adopted, but the customary legal system has remained, so the country's legislature is dual. These systems of law often conflict with each other. The Swazi monarch is above all *the* law in the country; therefore, at the top of the hierarchy is the king and queen mother. They work closely with *libandla* (council). The chiefs are next in line followed by their *tindvuna* (chiefdom ministers), and *bagijimi* (chief-runners). In each chiefdom there is *bandlancane* (chiefdom council), and all men form a *libandla* (council) at chiefdom level. The homestead is a small version of a kingdom, and the similar hierarchical levels of power operate: the man is the head of the homestead and he shares his power with his mother, *gogo* (grandmother) in a manner similar to the king and queen mother at national level.

At national level all Swazi people, except for infants, perform some services for royalty. In the past every man belonged to a *libutfo* (regiment) for war and tribute labour. The regiments were formed and named by the king every five years. The king still calls them out four times a year: during *incwala* ceremony in December or January; for (*kuhlakula*) weeding the king's fields (mainly sorghum fields) in January; *kuvuna* (harvesting) in the fields in May and *kubhula* (threshing) the sorghum or maize in July.

Some of the young men opt to be permanent warriors attached to royal homesteads, and this is called *kubutseka* (the custom of staying around the person of the king<sup>25</sup>). The men who join the regiments willingly decide to do service for the king in a similar way that a woman labours for her husband and their family. The *emabutfo* (regiments) (See appendix 6) who permanently reside at the royal homesteads and those who come for labour when summoned by the king are all fed by the king. He slaughters cattle to feed them. The regiments are given names which have significance such as *balondoloz*i (the keepers), *lindimpi* also called *malindane* (those expecting war), *gcina* (the last one) and more. Apart from choosing to permanently reside in royal homesteads young men may also join *emabutfo* through rendering their services to the king at the beginning of *incwala lencane* (little *incwala*) when they go to cut the *lusekwane* (a special kind of thorny bush) which is utilised during the main *incwala* to build the king's kraal and enclosures.

Young women<sup>26</sup>, on the other hand, have their own *libutfo* (regiment) which is named by the king whenever he passes an order that they will take *umcwasho*<sup>27</sup> for one of 'his' *emakhosatana* (princesses). The king gives the name of the girls' *libutfo* on the day he announces that they have to take on the *umcwasho* commitment. At the end of the *umcwasho* the young women maintain their name until the king initiates the next *umcwasho* period. The young women's *libutfo*'s name is also significant, for example in 2001 the last *libutfo* was named *Imbali* (flower) which stands for beauty. The previous girls' *libutfo*'s name was *ingabisa* (pride), meaning the young women were the pride of the nation.

<sup>25</sup> Mamba, Glory states that the *Kubutseka* concept entails the performance of any state duties in the name of kingship ("Group identity in Swazi oral poetry" in Moyo Stephen P.C., Sumaili, Tobias W.C., and Moody, James A. *Oral Traditions in Southern Africa*, 1986: 193).

<sup>26</sup> In the Swazi context young women who render royal duties such as *umhlanga* and *umcwasho* are called *tintfombi* (young women).

<sup>27</sup> *Umcwasho* is the custom whereby the king passes out an order for all girls or young women to abstain from sex for a specific period of time. He does this in honour of one of the princesses. On their heads they wear special woollen tassels and beads which are coded in colours that symbolise whether they have (*tingani*) lovers or not. The tassels and beads are also called *umcwasho*.



The young women's *libutfo* pays tribute to the monarchy by going to cut *umhlanga* (reeds) (see appendix 7). Women also have their *libutfo* called *lutsango*<sup>28</sup> (see appendix 8); whose name has not changed from the time the *libutfo* was established by the late king Sobhuza II in 1966. *Lutsango* render their services to royalty by cutting *umhlanga* and also dancing for the king and queen mother like the young women do. They also have a special day when they bring *emaganu/ buganu* (marula beer) to the monarchs. The day of *emaganu* is celebrated with dancing<sup>29</sup>.

In order to ensure that all these national ceremonies and activities are carried out in the correct order, chiefs in their various *imiphakatsi* (chiefdoms) take a leading role. Allegiance to the king in these activities is enforced by fining those who fail to become involved. As times have changed and some people are in full time employment, those who are necessarily absent pay their fines in monetary terms rather than cattle as was the case in the past. The practice of imposing a fine on those who fail to render free services to royalty suggests that people may give the services out of coercion rather than loyalty. My observation is that both play a part and this coexistence of loyalty and coercion is also evident in the ranking of clans as well as in interpersonal relationships within the homesteads.

#### **2.2.10 Kinship and Swazi Clans**

Every Swazi has a *sibongo* (clan name) which they inherit patrilineally. Each *sibongo* is very important, and tells from which ethnic group each person descends. People of the same *sibongo* descend from the same ancestor, because most of the clan names were the ancestors' first names, and were later passed down onto the descendants.

Every Swazi belongs to a patrilineal clan each of which has a distinctive *isibongo* or clan name. The clan names are either eponymous or refer to episodes in the history of the founders (Kuper 1950: 86)

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<sup>28</sup> *Lutsango* is the name of the women's regiment in Swaziland. The regiment was established in 1966 when Swaziland was preparing for its independence. *Lutsango* is the Siswati term for hedge; therefore women are regarded as the national hedge, protecting the Swazi nation.

<sup>29</sup> The Times of Swaziland, 19<sup>th</sup> February 2006.

The history of each clan can be learnt from the clan name and *tinanatelo* (clan praises) that are added onto the clan name when an individual is praised or appreciated. For those clans that originate elsewhere, part of the history found in the clan names goes back as prior to the first members of the clan became part of the Swazi people. For example the Nkhambule clan that originated from Lesotho has praises that include the term *Msutfu* (Sotho person). An example of the narration of a clan's history can be found in the praises of the Dlamini clan to which I belong:

*Nkhosi Dlamini*  
(King! You, who eat at noon,)  
*Wena wekunene*  
(You, who is the rightful one)  
*Wena weluhlanga lwakangwane*  
(You of Ngwane's reed)  
*Wena wacedza Lubombo ngekuhleletela*  
(You, who mounted up the Lubombo mountains easily)  
*Wena wafihla lokuhle emfuntini*  
(You, who hid the good thing within the grass)  
*Awucedvwa Mlangeni*  
(We cannot finish you, you of the sun)

The various clans found in Swaziland are ranked so that the more a clan is affiliated to royalty, the more important it is. The affiliation manifests itself in different ways such as whether a clan has ever given birth to a Swazi king or not. These clans are called *ematalankhosi* 'those who give birth to the king.' Examples of such clans are the Ndwandwe, Mndzebele, Simelane, Nkhambule, Mdluli and Tfwala. Other clans have special roles to play as king's wives such as the Matsebula, Motsa and Dlamini.

The *sibongo* is exogamous, except that the king may marry a woman of his own *sibongo* provided she is not too closely related. In this case her father would be regarded as the founder of a new clan, and his name would be given to his descendants coupled with the royal *sibongo*, 'Nkosi'. Nkosi Mamba, Nkosi Magongo and Nkosi Ginindza (Marwick 1940: 56)

### 2.3 Social Structure

The structure of Swazi society has been highly gendered from the pre-colonial era, and continues into present day Swaziland. Life in Swaziland was, and still is, centred on

work, so from an early age the socialization of children prepared them for their future tasks. In pre-colonial times children were taught their work roles through informal education, which formed a part of their daily life and meant that everyone was educated. Young boys and girls were encouraged to have respect for adults, and it was a common thing to hear people say, "respect and obey your elders" (Kuper, 1961: 117). Swazi concept of respect is different from one that is more generally understood.

### **2.3.1 *Inhlonipho* (Respect) cultural pillar**

Respect is not a definite concept. Its meaning varies according to different cultures. What is universal about the concept is that it connotes holding a high opinion, esteem or reverence for another individual. In other cases, 'respect' is used to refer to a feeling of admiration for, or consideration of, another person. This attitude or feeling towards another person is amicable when it is mutual. The Swazi version of respect however is one-sided instead of reciprocal. In most cases Swazi people encourage respect to be from bottom to top rather than both ways. There is an overemphasis on respect from children towards adults, women towards men, as well as the subservient people of any kind towards the more acclaimed ones in society.

Respect can be demonstrated in a variety of contexts including conversation, eating, sitting and almost every activity in the life of the Swazi. Communication is not expected to be two-way. It is mainly top-down. Those in authority talk and the 'subservient' ones 'receive.' Swazi people discourage dialogue. When a man talks to a woman, or parents talk to children, society expects the latter to receive the message without any interruptions or question. A woman or child who questions or answers back is considered to be a disrespectful person. This, therefore, deprives women and children of the opportunity to express their views during conversation unless talking to peers.

When adults are talking, children are not expected to be there or to listen. If the presence of children in the vicinity of adults engaged in a conversation is unavoidable, they must keep quiet even if they think their contribution to the conversation would benefit the adults. Normally adults chase children away when they want to talk about something

important. Unlike other societies where eating time is a family activity, in a traditional Swazi homestead men eat alone, and women, too, eat alone, although sometimes they may eat with their children. However, such practices are diminishing because of modern influences and the nature of houses that people live in. A man who eats at table with his children in the city, experiences problems when he takes his family to the rural countryside for extended family communal activities or ceremonies, because sometimes the children find it hard to adapt and live up to the expectation of the relatives in the countryside.

Similarly, in the olden days women and children were not expected to sit on chairs, and some people in the countryside still regard it as disrespectful for them to do so, so that whenever city dwellers, especially those who work in the cities go to the countryside, conflict arises. The perception of women's 'disrespect' extends to what they wear on their heads. Although Swazi women did not cover their hair in pre-colonial times, but had their hair done into *sicholo* (hair 'bun'), society now regards it disrespectful for them not to cover their heads.

The conflict in practices regarded as disrespectful arises whenever the conservatives of pre-colonial practices and the modernized people, whether from the city or countryside come together. The conservatives, who are in most cases, those in authority, in various settings, tend to impose expectations which worked in pre colonial times without considering the other variables which have changed over the years. This kind of imposition is most clearly demonstrated in the case of widows who suffer doubly due to multiple laws which society imposes on them. A majority of the laws were applicable during olden days where life was very different from what it is now. I discuss these laws further below. Whenever a widow fails to keep any of these laws, her in-laws regard her as a disrespectful woman. Sometimes it is customary to say that a widow who breaks the laws imposed on her is the cause of natural disasters such as drought, tornados and storms.

What I describe here shows that the concept of respect among the Swazi people is fundamentally different from what may prevail elsewhere. It is also obscure and leaves many questions that need to be explored. Swazi 'respect' is an oppressive yoke that this patriarchal society uses to control young people and women, and deprive them of the ability to be innovative, creative and productive and to insist that they always 'look up' to authority to make decisions and choices for them. This is Freire's "internalized oppression."

From a very early stage in life, children are taught various performances which lead to their internalized oppression. The performances I examine form a vital part of the socialization of children and people generally.

### **2.3.2 Socialization of children**

Swazi people regard girls as solely destined for marriage and childbearing. A baby girl is referred to as a 'stranger' that is, someone who is immediately and continuously from birth 'on her way' to another homestead, where she would '*cela inkhonto*' (seek refuge). Whenever a woman has given birth to a baby girl it is common to hear midwives announce, "*utfole sihambi, umuntfu webantfu sisi*", which means "sister you have got someone on her way to other people where she belongs). Society instils the ideology that the main purpose of girls in life is marriage and childbearing from early infancy until adulthood. Girls play in ways that imitate grown women while boys imitate grown men. In a manner similar to the relationship between royalty and the nation, questioning the orders and actions of adults by young people was, and still is, regarded as a rebellious attitude:

The play world of Swazi children is based on imitation more than imagination. It is the adult world copied without being experienced (Kuper1961: 118)

This society produces young people who unquestioningly accept what adults and other figures of authority command, and deprives the young people from acting upon their inborn drive to be imaginative and explorative. The society encourages rigidity, which

has resulted in the country being among the last to hold onto many cultural practices which have been long discarded in other countries because of their oppressive nature. The very nature of this practice counteracts “authentic existence” (and deprives the people of achieving what they want in life by instilling fear:

...although they desire authentic existence, they fear it. They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized  
(Freire 1972: 24)

In this society, mothers have a primary role of socializing their children. They use the knowledge that was instilled in them from their own childhood and was repeated every day of their lives. The main objective of a child’s socialization in this society is to alert the young person of the expectations of society. Life in Swaziland is mainly about work, and it is highly gendered. The gendered nature of work applies both in and outside the home. Girls are expected to be attached to the home, so their socialization includes chores that are specifically within the home setting. There are, however, other responsibilities which they have outside the home, such as work in the fields and looking after cattle where there are no boys. On the other hand a majority of boys’ duties lie outside the home.

### **2.3.3 Gendering of work: women and girls**

Women are responsible for the socialization of girls. This socialization continues throughout life until a woman qualifies to be the head of a family as when after the death of her husband she remains as the eldest member of her family<sup>30</sup>. Women are responsible for doing all household chores, such as cleaning and cooking. There are differences between rural and urban women in that some of the rural women have to fetch water, collect firewood, grind corn into mealie-meal, work in their *tivandze* (gardens), plant, weed, and harvest the fields. In olden days (and in some rural parts of the country still), women also took a leading role in storing the corn to separate the grain from the cobs at the right time, and finally winnowing the maize for storage.

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<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 4 where one of the characters in Hilda Kuper’s play *A Witch in my heart*, NaboSikhova complains about the unjust treatment of women until the time they are old.

In the past, and currently, in the countryside, as women work, they strap their babies onto their backs, which makes it difficult for them, so whenever possible childcare is left in the hands of any woman in the homestead. Harvest time and early winter was the time when women could 'relax' a little and engage in activities such as plaiting ropes, repairing their roofs, weaving baskets and mats, pottery and re-styling their *ticholo* (hair 'bun') hairstyles. This kind of 'relaxing' indicates that a Swazi woman's life is about work, and if pleasure is required, the women glean it from the work they do. It is this attitude that women instil into young girls.

Girls are educated in domestic duties and their routine remains almost unvaried from childhood onwards. They steadily acquire the arts and skills considered necessary for women and desired in them (Kuper 1961:118).

What is noteworthy about the socialization of girls is that women encourage them to be submissive, responsive to men and never oppose them. Women emphasize the importance of this so that girls come to believe that their life is centred on pleasing a future husband and his entire extended family. With few exceptions, girls end up believing that their significance in life is marked by their marital status. This is articulated in the common phrase married women say about their husbands, *wangenta umuntfu* (he made me a person) or *wangenta umuntfu sibili* (he made me a real person). This implies that if a woman is not married she is not 'a real person'. As each girl grows up she takes it as her duty to instil into her own daughters the things she has learnt from her own mother. This has become the legacy of even twenty-first century Swazi girls and women. They develop a strong desire to be married, regardless of the quality of the marriage. Each girl who marries assumes a sense of achievement, accentuating the idea of having been a 'good' girl to her parents:

Swazi society in the past has shown extreme displeasure at women who have been unable to marry for whatever reason. Consequently, many women have felt extreme gratitude to partners who marry them. They have felt indebted to these men who have elevated their status in the eyes of society by making them wives (WLSA 1998, *Family in Transition: The experience of Swaziland* 1998: 202)

Women who get married also feel a sense of achievement because their parents are esteemed within the society. This esteem is elevated when a man pays *lobolo*<sup>31</sup> for his wife. I discuss more of this in the section on the status of women. This kind of sense of achievement is also pronounced during the girls' socialization on the issue of cautioning girls against having sexual intercourse before they get married. They call this *kuvula sibaya seyise* (opening a fathers' kraal), which means that a girl's chastity is perceived as her father's wealth. If therefore, a girl makes herself easily available sexually to a man, that man has invaded the girl's father's kraal.

Girls are socialized to guard safely their 'fathers' kraals', which means refusing to sleep with a man who is not yet committed to them. However, this is complicated because a woman can still be married before paying *lobolo*, such as in the case of *kuteka* (forced marriage). The whole process of a Swazi marriage is complicated because it has multiple variables which are complicated in themselves. The main issue during socialization is to ensure girls avoid sexual intercourse and pregnancy. Society regards it as shameful for a girl to fall pregnant whilst still in her father's house. In the past, during the period of *umcwasho*, a girl who fell pregnant cost the family of the man who made her pregnant, a cow, to be slaughtered and eaten by her age mates. It also cost her father a cow:

Formerly, if a girl became pregnant before marriage, her age mates seized a beast from her parents, killed it in a special way and ate it (Kuper 1961: 130).

However well fed her age mates became, nevertheless society composed songs of ridicule to humiliate such a girl. The songs of ridicule also formed a strong base for the internalized oppression of the young girls because they abstained from sex for the benefit of their parents (mainly their fathers) rather than their own self-esteem. Even where there was some self-esteem, it was based on the fact that they had pleased their fathers or parents. In this way the girls were trained to always place themselves second in whatever they did, and place their parents - and later their husbands - first. This socialization has

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<sup>31</sup> *Lobolo* is the *Siswati* term for bride price. This is in form of cattle that a man pays to the parents of the woman he marries, and may also now be in monetary form.



been passed down to all girls and has resulted in women enduring multiple forms of oppression in their marriages which for some has ultimately ended in their deaths.

Many women have suffered physical abuse to the point of death without telling anyone, because women are socialized in a way that discourages them from telling their problems, especially if they involve exposing shameful deeds by husbands or senior respectable members of a family. Society calls this, the act of keeping *tibi tendlu*<sup>32</sup> (house dirt) within, and jeers at a woman who exposes her *tibi tendlu*. In the past when a woman was getting married, senior women in her family including her mother, aunts and grandmothers gathered in *kagogo*<sup>33</sup> (the family sacred hut) to give final words for her to remember when facing challenges in her married life. Each woman keeps what she has been taught to teach it to her own daughters and even daughters-in-law.

In modern days the *kagogo* and *egumeni*<sup>34</sup> (hut enclosures) spaces have been displaced by the single house homestead, which are becoming more common even in rural settings. However, as a result of the significance these spaces carry, whenever a situation rises where there is a need for a discussion about family issues such as discussing the amount of *lobolo* that has to be paid for a woman, or when a woman is being given her final lecture before she goes to live with her in-laws, any modern space is used and instantly assumes a sacred status. The atmosphere in the sitting room changes from that of a room where the family normally sits and becomes a place where even the names of *labaphansi* (ancestors) are mentioned to make all participants of the discussion aware of the seriousness of the matter.

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<sup>32</sup> *Tibi tendlu* refers to any shameful deed done by a senior member of a family, especially a man. In Swazi culture it is taboo to tell outsiders or publicize such deeds. The people use the *tibi tendlu* phrase especially to prevent women and children from sharing their painful or 'shameful' experiences with other people.

<sup>33</sup> *KaGogo* is the main hut in a homestead in which all family business is discussed. Even in urban settings there are special spaces set aside to substitute for the sacred nature of the hut. An ordinary living room can assume the status of *kagogo* if the family is discussing issues that deserve to be discussed inside the *kagogo* hut.

<sup>34</sup> *Egumeni* is the area outside the huts but inside the reeds enclosures. In pre-colonial Swaziland women used to sit there mentoring one another and also educating their children, especially girls.

### 2.3.4 Gendering labour: men and boys

Unlike women, the role of men in the past was mainly to “[plough], build, and tend the cattle” (Booth 1983: 52) although they were sometimes also involved in the weeding and harvesting, primarily a task for women. At the appropriate season, men went hunting to provide game for food. It was also the duty of men to socialize boys into their future roles.

Boys were trained in a way “directed towards hardening them physically and disciplining them mentally” (Kuper 1961: 117). They were trained to be self-reliant. Their practical skills included sculpting, carving, leather tanning, “hunting, and herding” (ibid). During the day, older boys herded cattle, while the younger ones looked after the calves and goats. Adult men taught boys by telling them stories about the history of the nation and their families. This took place mainly at *esangweni* (the entrance to the cattle byre). From an early age boys were trained to fight so it was normal to find boys fighting each other with *tindvuku* (tough sticks), or even wrestling. They were discouraged from running away even if they were being beaten severely as this prepared them for war.

The *emabutfo* were the more formal, structured training ground for hardening the Swazi boys and men in order to perform their military duties. The whole society greatly discouraged gentleness among boys and reviled laziness for both boys and girls. They told stories of lazy people who had some catastrophes befall them because of their laziness, and they also composed songs to make everyone detest laziness. Everyone was taught to define ‘laziness’ and all other behaviour in a gender specific way. It was instilled into boys that a man is a ‘king’ in his homestead. Aware that a king rules, they grew up knowing that they had to fulfil that role of ‘kingship’ and that included, pivotally, the control of their wives.

Swazi society has carried on to this day the socialization which was mainly applicable during pre colonial times, where life was rural and there was no formal education and employment. Life then was completely different from what it is now. Now, both boys and girls are exposed to the same experiences through formal education. They study the same

subjects, and get employed in the same job settings. In the past the occupations of men and women were determined by their physical build, and this still happens in some cases, but a majority of jobs are determined by the academic or other qualifications. This has resulted in some women becoming heads of schools, colleges, universities, banks and various companies. When society carries to the present, cultural values and practices which worked well in the past, complications can result. This transference of past practices to the present without considering the other variables involved has led to the gender inequalities rife in the country.

## **2.4 Status of Women**

Women are a vital part of the family in Swaziland. Society values a woman according to her reproductive capacity which is seen “as a resource because it ensures the survival of the male line” (WLSA 1998: 203). From the time the Swazi nation was established “Swazi men counted their wealth in their women, children and their cattle” (Booth 1983: 8). This has multiple negative implications for women including polygamous marriages, arranged marriages in order to acquire cattle, as well as wife inheritance after the death of a man.

### **2.4.1 Polygamy**

According to Swazi culture, a man is free to have as many wives as he wants. He can also have as many girl friends as he likes<sup>35</sup>. Polygamy is strongly supported within Swazi society, and is justified in part by reference to the Swazi kings, particularly Sobhuza II, who ruled for the longest period and outdid all previous kings, by having seventy wives and reputedly two hundred and ten children. Wives and children were wealth and assisted the man accumulate even more by enabling him to possess his own workforce to maintain his fields.

Polygamous relationships are not as common as they used to be, but they still exist, as is the case of the monarch. The women within a polygamous marriage are not treated

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<sup>35</sup> A man's having many girl friends as he likes inevitably conflicts with the ethos of young unmarried women remaining virgins until their marriage.

equally by their husband. Every man has his favourite wife who earns this position through her own personality and her appeal to her husband. In a polygamous relationship, there is a head wife, who may even assume the position of her husband's mother once his parents have died. He calls her *make* (mother) or *Mamkhulu* (senior mother). This woman becomes the most respected in the family and may even be involved in important family discussions. Seniority can be acquired either through the order of her marriage into the family or via her clan's status. For example, if a woman from the royal family marries into a family, she becomes *lodla umuti* (one who inherits the homestead), by automatically becoming the head wife. Inevitably some women are completely neglected whilst still living within the marriage.

Polygamy is no longer widespread in Swaziland, but there is another yet more serious type of social behaviour among men, which society encourages through the 'values' that have been retained from the past. This is sexually promiscuous behaviour among men.

#### **2.4.2 Promiscuous men**

According to *imihambo nemasiko* (practices and customs) of the country, a man, whether married or unmarried remains a *lijaha* (a young man) all his life. Being *lijaha* means that a man can have as many sexual partners as he wants. Society's approval of men's promiscuous behaviour is evidenced by even the term for "a man who has many women with whom he engages in sexual activities, *inganwa*" (WLSA 1998: 200). The 'masterminds' of this same society that encourage girls to be chaste are the very men that demand relationships with young women. Most of the relationships do not even end in marriage as anticipated by the young women, but in a variety of heartbreaking state of affairs such as pregnancy or forced abortion. When this happens society blames the women for being morally loose, disregarding the underlying factors that lead to the disastrous situations.

The women who become victims of promiscuous men are held to be partially to blame, but numerous reasons lead to their victimization, including false promises of marriage, poverty, threats, and others that are related to the subservient position of young women.

Many women who live in conditions of extreme poverty give in to the lure of money and promise of a better life. They only realise the truth of their fate when they are already victims. A majority of young women fall prey to men when they work as live-in maids or domestic workers. One woman I interviewed stated bitterly:

I was really confused as we lived in the same house with his kind wife who had no clue of what happened behind her back. I did not even love him, but had no choice because he gave me some extra money to buy a few things I could not buy with the meagre wages<sup>36</sup>.

Some young women do not even willingly get into a sexual relationship for the men often use their power and senior positions to coerce the women into having sex with them. They threaten harm if the women disclose the truth and thus through fear women keep silent and the problem continues. The threats from men in positions of power also happen within families where young girls and women fall victim to sexual abuse by cousins, brothers, uncles and even fathers. If they seek help, they are often ridiculed by other family members, a majority of whom are women. The women blame the victims for exposing *tibi tendlu* (house dirt) saying 'every household has its own dirt which is not made public.' This sad truth shows that "socialization has made women accept and perpetuate the status quo" (WLSA 1998: 63).

#### **2.4.3 *Kwendziswa* (Arranged marriages)**

Arranged marriages used to be very common in Swaziland. Most men who arrange marriages for their daughters look for wealthy men who have a lot of cattle so as to ensure that the girl's father got *lobolo* cattle. A man would make an agreement with his wealthy friend that he would get his daughter for a wife. Once the two men are agreed the deal would be done and when 'ready' the girl would be sent off to marry or even sent off to grow up in the homestead of the husband to be often under the care of her future co-wives. Nobody cared what the girl had to go through emotionally, physically or psychologically. Arranged marriage was a business transaction between two men who

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<sup>36</sup> Personal Interview with a live-in maid in Manzini 2005.

exchange commodities: cattle and a girl. As a surety, the girl was sent off before she could even experience feelings towards boys of her own age.

Perpetrators of this practice argue that fathers arranged the marriages, because they wanted to ensure that their daughters ended in the hands of men who were wealthy and could support them. This flimsy explanation implies that in an arranged marriage fathers do everything for the interest of their daughters, yet the reality is that the daughters are traumatised. A study by WLSA reveals many cases where women who have lived all their lives in an arranged marriage relate various traumatic experiences they had. One woman from the Lubombo region of the country was interviewed at the age of fifty having been given away at the age of twelve:

I was given away when I was 12 years old. I was given away as a child. I knew nothing of the arrangement. They left me to grow up a bit before sending me away. They paid 12 live cattle. When they gave me away I had not started looking around for boyfriends. They said to me "you realise you are growing up. We have already eaten (*lobolo* cattle) from that home." I did not say anything. What could I say? I had to accept the arrangement (WLSA 1998: 202).

This example, my own observations, findings and assertions by many researchers affirm that a woman is regarded as a commodity that could be exchanged for wealth, and basically her family *badla ngaye* (they eat through her). The father and family are not interested in the welfare of the woman but what they can benefit through her (Astuti, Rita, "Cattle beget children"- But women must bear them. Fertility, Sterility and belonging among women in Swaziland" in Tieleman, Kenk J. *Scenes of Change: visions on developments in Swaziland: Papers presented at the seminar 'Social Sciences in Swaziland' Free University Amsterdam, February 1986: 11*, McGadden, Patricia, "Gender, power and patriarchy." in WLSA Working Paper No. 9 *Changing Families, Changing Laws* 1994: 64 and WLSA, *Family in Transition: The experience of Swaziland*, 1998: 180).

Arranged marriages still exist in the country, though less so than in the past. The cases that I have encountered in my research are mainly affiliated with *lobolo*, where a woman

whose *lobolo* was paid has a problem having children. In these instances, her family sends out a girl as *inhlanti* (cleanser) to bear children on her behalf. Normally the girl is her younger sister or her brother's daughter. In most cases if her brother's daughter is sent to help, it is the brother who had benefited from her *lobolo* cattle. From all this it is clear that the main reason for arranged marriages was cattle, therefore, next, I examine the *lobolo* and *inhlanti* (cleanser) concepts.

#### **2.4.4 Lobolo (Bride price)**

*Lobolo* is a practice where the family of the man makes payments to the family of the woman throughout the process of marriage. A Swazi marriage can be a very long process, sometimes lasting a lifetime. It is conducted in stages including *kugcobisa libovu* (smearing of red ochre)<sup>37</sup>, paying *lobolo* in different stages as well as an *umtsimba* (wedding celebration) and can often result in endless family disputes. Due to a high demand for certification<sup>38</sup> a couple who are married according to Customary Rites and issued a marriage certificate after *kugcobisa libovu* (smearing of red ochre) has been done. Although the couple may have the certificate, they do not feel fully married until *lobolo* has been paid. After *lobolo* has been paid *umtsimba* (wedding celebration) has to follow whereby the wife gives *umhlambiso* (cleansing gifts) to her in-laws.

The most common order for marriage, however, is to start with *kugcobisa libovu* (smearing of red ochre), which most Swazi people regard as the official symbol of taking a wife. Sometimes the other stages do not even follow at all. In some cases a man would *teka* (force into marriage by smearing red ochre) a young woman who is only a girlfriend and not ready for marriage. There are many such cases, where a young woman is regarded as legally married without even her parents' involvement. This happens when a man invites his girlfriend to 'visit' him and sleep at his place. For most school girls it is not easy to visit their boyfriends, so, some of them take opportunities such as the time away

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<sup>37</sup> *Kugcobisa libovu* (smearing of red ochre) is done on a woman to legalize and seal her marriage. Cattle have to be paid to cleanse or undo this ritual.

<sup>38</sup> In Swaziland, for a long time only Civil Rites marriages were issued marriage certificates, but now even the Customary Rites marriages are certified because of the requirement for people to state their marital status when filling in forms such as tax return forms.

from home during the *umhlanga* ceremony to visit the boyfriends. Men who want to marry their girlfriends forcefully also use the first opportunity they get to marry these girls by smearing them with *libovu* (red ochre). Such a case happened when one girl was believed to have gone to the *umhlanga*<sup>39</sup> ceremony, yet she had secretly gone to visit her boyfriend:

In Nhlangano, a 19 year old girl was 'teka-ed' [made a wife through *kuteka* (smearing red ochre) while attending reed dance. A ten member delegation from Hosea recently invaded a Khumalo homestead seeking a member of Imbali Regiment who was traditionally married at the homestead while her family knew that she was attending the reed dance (The Times of Swaziland, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2005).

Once a young woman has been smeared with *libovu* (red ochre), she is regarded as legally married whether her parents knew about it or not. All that the parents can do is to send a delegation to enquire and then wait for the man's people to pay the required cattle. In some cases they pay the *lobolo*, but even if they do not they can keep promising to because the payment of the cattle can be a lifelong process. Sometimes the man is counted as having paid *lobolo* just by paying only one or two head of cattle. This state of affairs places women at a disadvantage because they become bound into a marriage they did not even choose to be in. The involvement of *lobolo* payment complicates things further for the woman, who has to stay in there regardless of how she feels because when her parents have received cattle through her, she paradoxically assumes some sense of esteem. WLSA defines *lobolo* as "a pervasive and enduring feature of many customary marriage systems, which takes various forms and is often justified on varying grounds" (WLSA 1993: 28).

The concept of *lobolo* pervades both Customary and Civil Rites marriages. The Civil Rites marriage is clearly defined and its validation and nullification are also clearly defined. Although the Civil Rites marriage does not require the payment of *lobolo*, parents of young women who decide to marry this way expect *lobolo* to be paid because each man regards his daughter as a way of adding cattle into his kraal. It is, therefore, common even in Civil Rites marriages, to include *lobolo* payment, so that the couple get

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<sup>39</sup> See chapter three about *umhlanga* (reed) dance.



their parents' blessing. This has complicated marriages in Swaziland and contributed to endless debates about the custom.

On the other hand, the place of *lobolo* within Customary Rites marriage rites is not clear. It "involves fulfilling requisite traditional ceremonies and rituals over time" (Lule, Elizabeth, *Marriage and Marital Fertility in Rural Swaziland* 1986: 57) at a number of specific stages which all involve payment or slaughtering an animal.

The stages of *lobolo* include: 1) *kucela* (asking for the bride); 2) *kugcobisa libovu* (smearing of the bride with red ochre); 3) *Kumekeza* (the woman's weeping or singing prescribed songs in the kraal of her lover's homestead); 4) payment of *lobolo*; 5) *Inkhomo yekupheka* (payment of a cow in order for a girl or woman to be able to cook for her in-laws); and 6) Provisions of the two special *lobolo* cattle, *insulamnyembeti* (the drying of tears) and *lugege* (beast to be killed and eaten) beasts and payment of *inhlawulo* (compensation for the woman pregnant) in the case of pre-marital pregnancy. The *umtsimba* (wedding celebration) which includes *kugidza* (dancing) and *kuhlambisa* (the bride's provision of gifts to her in-laws) is an exciting stage of the process but does not have the significance of the other stages.

It is the fourth stage which is the key: payment of *lobolo*. A delegation is sent by the man's family to the bride's family to negotiate for the marriage. The delegation is called *bayeni* (in-laws). The negotiations are about the formation of long-standing ties between the two families and about agreeing on the number of cattle or amount of wealth to be paid to seal the relationship. The belief is that mutual respect and dignity are woven into the process, and the love between the man and woman is expanded to include the immediate and extended families. This way the woman becomes a permanent member of her husband's family<sup>40</sup> unless she is accused of theft, witchcraft or adultery.

A major concern in the controversy around *lobolo* is that although its payment is not the main validation of the marriage, a woman whose *lobolo* was paid, cannot easily terminate

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<sup>40</sup> If a woman is accused of theft, witchcraft or adultery she can be dismissed from her husband's family.

the marriage without facing opposition from his family who of course, made the payment. This has caused extensive problems for women when they face difficulties in their marriages. They are likely to fail to get support to end the marriage simply because *lobolo* was paid. However, the main problem is not simply with the repayment of *lobolo*, but the concomitant implication of a family failure. The woman's family feels disgraced when their daughter fails to endure the problems she encounters in marriage, so to them returning the cattle both symbolically and materially is not even an option they want to consider. They do their best to force their daughter to remain in the marriage regardless of what she is enduring in it.

Those who argue against *lobolo* say it is a way of 'selling' the bride to the man's family. Others say the woman is exchanged for cattle, (or, nowadays money). These critics of *lobolo* are accused of rejecting their culture and identity. Those who uphold it say it is a token of appreciation from the man and his family to the family of the woman. Some argue that:

*Lobolo* is a stabilising factor and guarantee of good treatment of the wife by the husband on the one hand, and a guarantee of good conduct on the part of the wife on the other, because should a husband ill-treat his wife, he will forfeit his cattle if the marriage is dissolved, and thus lose both wife and cattle, or alternatively, should the wife misbehave, the father would have to return *lobolo*, should the marriage be dissolved through her fault (Dlamini, C.M.R, *The judiciary analysis and critical evaluation of lobolo in a changing Zulu society* 1994: 6)

This argument rests on seeing *lobolo* as a guarantee of good behaviour from both parties, yet it also acknowledges the possibility of unsatisfactory behaviour. Should the marriage fail, it is the woman and her family - especially her father [and brother] who are 'penalised' and have to repay the *lobolo* cattle. Sometimes the cattle may have already been used and the woman's family find themselves in real trouble. This way, *lobolo* makes the woman's family watchdogs of the marriage, in favour of the men.

The idea that *lobolo* is purely a token of appreciation is also questionable, because a token of appreciation is never conditional nor is it a prerequisite but a choice made out of free

will. In the case of *lobolo*, the man does not choose to pay the cattle, but is obliged to. The number of cattle is rigidly stipulated to. Sometimes the *baloboli/ bayeni* (the people bringing *lobolo*), are chased because they have brought less than the expected amount! In conclusion, *lobolo* places women in a disadvantaged position in society. Furthermore, *lobolo* leads to another problem of *inhlanti* (cleanser) and *kulamuta* (a man's claiming his wife's sister for a wife).

#### **2.4.5 A man's right to claim his wife's sisters and nieces as additional wives**

A man who is accepted as a son-in-law because of paying *lobolo* is entitled to take one or more of his wife's sisters as wife without paying the full *lobolo*. Usually the bride's family gives away a younger sister to the bride as her *inhlanti* (cleanser), which means that if the bride later has a problem of bearing children, the younger sister does it on her behalf. Swazi people use the concept of *kuhlanta*, (cleansing) to imply that if a woman does not bear children, it is her fault, and her people need to do something to 'cleans' away her 'shame' of not bearing children. Blaming the woman directly affects the lives of the younger girls too, because they become a sacrifice to the man's drive to have children. The younger girl's consent is not considered at all and the man may pay no more than one head of cattle as compensation or additional gratitude for the younger sister, his *umlamu*. In this way, *lobolo* (bride price) not only binds the woman who has 'chosen' her husband, but also her younger sisters or her brother's daughter/s<sup>41</sup> who may be required to offer the services of a 'cleanser' and have no control over their own lives.

Those who argue for the continuance of the two *lobolo*-related practices, *inhlanti* (cleanser) and *kulamuta* say that it keeps the family and their wealth together. What is sad about this is that the perpetrators of these practices, men as well as some women who are victims themselves, disregard the welfare of those they sacrifice in their attempt to bind families together. This case of a young girl illustrates how horrendous the practice is:

In Nkamazi - Old man (56) weds girl (14). In a strange occurrence a 56 year-old man of Nkamazi married a 14-year old girl. Mandlenkhosi Nyatabo married the teenager

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<sup>41</sup> See footnote 32 above.

through the tried and tested Swazi custom *kuteka* two weeks ago. The teenager is Nyatabo's second wife. The first wife is 49 year old Margerate Nyatabo, and she is an aunt to the teenager. In Swaziland one is regarded an adult or ready to marry at 18 years. The young girl has been another victim to the *inhlanti* custom in which she is expected to carry out the marital duties of her ageing aunt. Abduction –The couple, (husband and wife), were this week arrested by Pigg's Peak police and slapped with an abduction charge (The Times of Swaziland, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2005)

The forty nine year old Margerate Nyatabo is an example of the women who join men in the oppressive acts of men against young women. All this is done in an attempt to keep family ties intact and preserve cattle. The idea of preserving cattle at the expense of people is ubiquitous and extends up to the time of the death of a man, when the widow has to be inherited by her husband's brother or cousin.

#### **2.4.6 Widows and wife inheritance**

Widows in Swaziland suffer two-fold because in addition to the loss of their husbands they also formally mourn the deaths for at least three years (Kuper, 1961: 35, 178). The mourning start as soon as the man had been buried.

Soon after the burial, the widows, accompanied by elderly women, go in sad procession of seniority to the river. An old woman in charge approaches the main widow and cuts off her hair with a spear belonging to the deceased... (Kuper 1961: 83).

If the man was a polygamist, all his wives had their hair cut, because in Swazi custom a woman's hair belongs to her lover or husband. She grows new hair for a new life. The widows had to wear their leather skirts inside out and wore woven grass caps to cover their heads. They spent a month indoors, without appearing in public. They had to abandon their daily business such as the care of their chickens and small gardens and put it in the hands of other people. At this time the extended family members supplied the widows' needs, and perpetrators of this aspect of Swazi practice assert that mourning was meant for the good of the widows who were allowed time to grieve and express their pain by wailing, or crying continuously until emotional healing occurred. However, men were not 'privileged' with this kind of isolationist 'favour' and did not go through any notable mourning on the death of their wives - a much more common occurrence through

childbirth. This is evident in that a man may marry as soon as the funeral of his wife is over without any restrictions.

People were generally expected to be compassionate towards widows, so their mourning attire served to make them identifiable. Being in seclusion was said to give women the opportunity to think carefully before deciding whether to stay with the husband's family or find a new husband. The latter was a harsh choice to make because it meant losing both her children and her husband's wealth, because her family assets could not be transferred to a person, who is not a *wengati* (blood relative). The widows' 'special' treatment involves keeping some rules and regulations imposed on them to 'protect' them from indulging in impulsive relationships which may result in unplanned pregnancy.

These laws that society imposes on widows under the false pretence of 'care' and 'protection' are a way of controlling the widows. Swazi culture regards women as immature adults who cannot make rational decisions. As a way of controlling widows and preventing them from entering into new relationships, they are expected to mourn their husbands' deaths for over a long period of three years.

Swazi people fear death and believe "that death is contagious" and that "the deceased seeks companionship" (Kuper 1961: 183). Widows were neither supposed to mingle with the general public, nor use the same bowls, cup or kitchen utensils as everyone else. This isolation, blame, and ridicule ultimately benefit men because fear of women becoming independent means that their wealth is regarded as belonging to the larger family. Women have no choice in this. The strict rules make them feel guilty if they make choices and decisions which do not favour the status quo.

In addition to being a widow, a woman who lost her husband was also an 'orphan' because her husband served as her father as well. A woman was to be under male authority all her life, married or unmarried. Widows were not exposed to any material need because their husbands' families, especially the brothers, had the responsibility of taking over: "Brothers of the deceased were deeply affected, because they continue his

homestead” (Kuper 1961: 184). The continuation of the deceased man’s homestead meant inheriting full responsibility over the widow. Although presented as an extra responsibility the whole idea of *kungena* (inheriting) a widow is centred on preserving the wealth of the dead person in the family who realise that if widow marries another man, she will leave her late husband’s family and take all the wealth and the new husband may benefit. Therefore, in order to prevent the family wealth going to a stranger, the culture disguises the selfishness by labelling it ‘positively’, as ‘caring’ for her. Far from being a ‘burden’ or ‘responsibility,’ a widow actually becomes *indla ngayo* (one through whom they eat) the wealth. Theoretically if the widow wants another husband she is ‘free’ to do so but loses all her household wealth including land accumulated in her husband’s lifetime.

#### **2.4.7 Women and land**

According to Swazi culture a woman cannot own a piece of land without the backing of a man. Unmarried women can only get a piece of land from the chief through *kukhonta*<sup>42</sup>, but the land can only be registered under the name of the woman’s father, brother or son. A married woman, on the other hand can get her own *sivandze* (piece of land) which is allocated to her by her husband or her in-laws. The claim is that whatever the woman gets from the land entirely belongs to her to use as she likes, but the reality is that she is still fully under control of her in-laws, such that she has to ask for permission to give away any produce from it.

If a married woman decides to leave her husband the piece of land is withdrawn from her. This also applies to widows and they can only continue using the land allocated to them if they do not marry men from outside the deceased husband’s family. If the deceased man had only one wife, she can also continue using her *sivandze* and his main land if she decides to remain with his family through *kungenwa* (being inherited) or staying with the family, but remaining unmarried.

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<sup>42</sup> See footnote number 20.

This aspect of Swazi culture is oppressive to women and makes them feel guilty should they want to live an independent life. It leaves widows with no options, but a life sentence in the prison of living to please other people. Their humanity is stifled and they are filled with “fear of freedom” (Freire 1972: 28). A young widow with children who wants to marry a man she loves may be thwarted by the idea of losing the family wealth which she needs to bring up her children and thus she gives in to the oppressive culture.

## **2.5 The response of Swazi women**

This chapter has discussed the historical background of Swaziland, the social status of women and the cultural practices that affect women. It showed how Swazi women have always existed within a patriarchal society that looks at life from the perspective of men. During the pre-colonial era, however, there were social structures which enabled women to challenge the patriarchal control. The structures did not operate easily for women because of the women’s socialization from childhood which made them understand their identity in a way befitting the male constructed social values; women’s value validated by a woman’s affiliation to a man in marriage and total submissiveness to a man in a way that deprived women of personal choices and decision making in life. For example, in every family the *gogo* (grandmother) or *khokho* (great grandmother) was the one who had the final word in matters of passing judgement in cases of family disputes.

At national level, this power accorded *gogo* is also vested on the Queen Mother at national level. Although the social structure enabled the *gogo* to have the final word, men contested this by superimposing their ideas and often manipulated the *gogo* to say what they wanted.

The male contesting *gogo*’s power became manifest after the death of the former King Sobhuza II, during the *Liqogo* Regime when the men who were supposed to support the Queen Mother Dzeliwe rule the country while still waiting for the coronation of the forthcoming king then, decided to remove her from power. What they did was un-cultural, but they did it out of power hunger. The removal of the Queen Mother from her position was a sign of the deviant behaviour of oppressive men which they assume whenever it suited

them; claiming some things ought to change because of the times we are in, and claiming we need to stick to our culture whenever the culture suits them.

Historically, the Swazi Queen Mothers including LaZidze, Labotsibeni, Zihlathi and Dzeliwe to name a few had their major episodes where they refused to give in to the abusive rule of men and stood their ground. This adamant aspect of Swazi women in leadership has been demonstrated also by one of King Mswati III's *emakhosikati* (wives), *Inkhosikati* LaMbikiza who defied the expectations of the male constructed ideology by assuming public engagements through singing, leading in developmental projects countrywide and earning a PhD in law, from The University of South Africa. Princess Sikhanyiso, King Mswati III's eldest daughter has also followed in her mother's example to stand up for what she believes in. She has spoken publicly against Swazi cultural practices that are abusive to women including polygamy. She has also openly challenged the abusive behaviour of some of the traditional leaders during the *umhlanga* ceremony. These few examples I have highlighted are not exclusively found within the royal family, but even at chiefdom and family levels.

As Swaziland is presently experiencing major problems of poverty and HIV/AIDS, women are the ones who suffer most because although under the control of men, they are the managers of their homesteads. They have a huge responsibility and limited resources for carrying out the responsibilities.

There are many good aspects of Swazi culture when practiced with the interest of the whole nation at heart, not just men, but women and children too. What is happening to women in Swaziland reflects a "dehumanized" (Freire 1972: 24) nation. Whenever the progressive factions of the nation advocate that the nation revisit its 'culture' to maintain what is good for the people and eliminate what is irrelevant they face opposition. During his reign especially after independence in the 1970s to the 1980s, King Sobhuza II urged his people to maintain only the good aspects of Swazi culture and discard what did not benefit them. He advised his people to adopt good practices from the new foreign cultures and reject those that are harmful.



Some of the women as well as men are engaged in a struggle to fight the inequalities that exist. The women especially have realized that it is their duty as the oppressed to change their undesirable condition.

It is therefore essential that the oppressed wage the struggle to resolve the contradiction in which they are caught (Freire 1972: 38).

## **2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how the Swazi people became a nation. It has shown how from early childhood society teaches girls and women that they are meant to live for men, that a woman is an incomplete person without a man. It also teaches that a woman has to be under the control of a man all her life: firstly her father and later her husband. The internalized oppression negates any form of liberation women seek. Although the patriarchal nature of the country has imposed oppressive measures on women, the defiant women have always struggled to subvert the oppression in numerous ways including the forms of performance. One of the strategies used to instil this internalized oppression is the performance forms available in the country, ranging from lullabies, stories, songs, dance, riddles, praise poems, music and ordinary communication. It is to these forms of performance that I now turn in Chapter 3.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Forms of Performance in Swaziland: Theorising Performance**

African theatre aims at communicating through performance. The salient constituents of this art are: dance, poetry, music, mime, gesture, rhythm, and mood variation...African theatre can be seen as cultural habit that is as old as organized human communities. (Motsa, Zodwa, "The Missing Link in SiSwati Modern Drama" in Lokangaka, Losambe and Sarinjeive, Devi (ed.) *Pre-colonial and Post-colonial Drama and Theatre in Africa*. 2001: 34-35).

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter explores the forms of performance in Swaziland and how they are used to both entertain and instil cultural values. As I discuss each form I pay special attention to its role in the development of women.

#### **3.1 An overview of Performance in Swaziland**

Performance in Swaziland is featured in the general life of the people where social practices from pre-colonial times have been carried on to the present day. Swazi people have always used performance as an educational tool in the continuous socialization of the various sectors of society. The educational and entertainment roles of performance have always happened simultaneously, sometimes without any clear distinction.

Performance is gendered. Although there have been many changes in general life from the pre-colonial period to the present Swaziland, performance still has its pre-colonial qualities. As a means of power control men perform in ways that are not accessible to women. For performances such as storytelling and riddles, men and boys perform in more public and outdoor spaces, whereas women and children perform privately indoors.

The subject matter and themes of the performances are also gendered. Men's narratives are about history, war, hunting, courage and endurance of pain without expression of

emotions such as sympathy and love. On the other hand, women's narratives are about being hard-working, submissive, kind, caring and what Swazi people regard as 'good' qualities in women.

All forms of performance in Swaziland tend to be prescriptive, telling people what they have to do in life. They leave very little room, if any, for individuals to make choices and changes in life. As I have shown, the source of the prescriptions is the traditional patriarchal system. Although patriarchal, the system uses women as well as men to instil its values. Paulo Freire's explains this:

One of the basic elements of the relationship between the oppressor and oppressed is *prescription*. Every prescription represents the imposition of one individual's choice upon another, transforming the consciousness of the person prescribed to into one that conforms with the prescriber's consciousness. Thus the behaviour of the oppressed is prescribed behaviour, following as it does the guidelines of the oppressor (Freire 1996: 28- 29).

Women activists who have identified the oppressive nature of the culture utilize performance to struggle and negotiate their way towards the emancipation of women. They get rid of the oppressed mentality and start making proclamations that counteract what their oppressors have instilled in them. They are not afraid to claim their freedom so they subvert the internalised oppression instilled by the oppressor in them.

As part of their effort to acquire social emancipation, women 'invade' some of the genres, times and spaces specifically set aside for men. This helps them assume power which they would otherwise be denied. It is the assumption of this power that eventually leads to opportunities for the development of the women because performing can be used to challenge the socially accepted value systems.

The role of Swazi women in performance continuously shifts between the condition of 'objectivity,' (where they conform to the 'prescriptions' by men) and 'subjectivity,'

(where they take full responsibility for their own lives, deciding what they want for themselves.) The latter is not easily attained because of many years of “internalized oppression.” In order to illustrate this, firstly, I discuss folklore, then rituals at domestic and national levels and lastly drama.

### **3.2 Swazi Folklore**

Performances of lullabies, proverbs, riddles, songs, dances, music, praises and stories have been passed down through the ages. Whilst adopting modern lifestyles, Swaziland has preserved its culture and traditions as a vital element in the day-to-day existence of the people. However, with the propagation of modern technology and the use of radio and television some folklore is deteriorating even in rural parts of the country.

My discussion starts from the folklore as it was during the pre-colonial time. However, there is no clear point at which there was change from folklore to modern media because the change has been gradual. Passing on aspects of Swazi folklore to the younger generations has been mainly a domain of women because they spend more time with both boys and girls early in life, before boys begin to receive their specialized male socialization from men.

In the past, women used every opportunity they had to teach their children the cultural values of the people so even infants who were too young to understand were introduced to the values through lullabies sung by young girls and women. This kind of folklore is dying away in urban and semi urban parts of the country where childcare is drifting away from mothers and childminders within the family to day care centres.

#### **3.2.1 Lullabies**

Infant care was not the responsibility of the mother only. Other women and girls that lived within the same homestead helped looked after infants. Because breastfeeding was the primary mode of feeding babies when women had to work in the fields, tilling the soil, planting or weeding their *tivandze* (small gardens), they used to bring along a

younger girl to hold the infant whilst they worked. When the infant became hungry, the mother sat down, drank *emahewu* (drink brewed with soft porridge) and breastfed the baby. Sometimes if the baby cried whilst its mother was working the child minder would sing a lullaby to send it to sleep. The popular lullaby was *lololololo*:

*Lololololo, lololololo,*  
(lalalala, lalalala)  
*Nangu nabojekwa nangu nabontsaki*  
(Here is sparrow's mum, here is swallow's mum)  
*Nangu nabojikijelinyon'emakhabeni,*  
(Here is the one who throws the birds in the crops)  
*Nangu nabojekwa nangu nabomntfwana*  
(Here is sparrow's mum, here is baby's mum)  
*Nangu nabojikijel'ingane'emakhabeni*  
(Here is the one who throws the baby in the crops)

The mother would then sing along with the girl in a deeper voice repeating the same words after every line the girl sang:

*Nalusweti loludl'emazinyane.*  
(Here is the eagle that eats young goats).

Although this kind of a lullaby was meant to lull the baby into sleep, its words were threatening, telling the infant that if it continued crying, the eagle that ate baby goats would come and eat it too. The lullaby also threatened the baby that if it cried, the one who threw birds like sparrows and swallows, as well as human babies away into the bushy crops would come and throw it away too.

Another popular lullaby that was used in the past as well as presently in the rural parts of the country is *Thula mntfwanami* (Hush my baby):

<i>Thula mntfwanami</i>	(Quiet, my child)
<i>Unyok'akalimanga</i>	(Your mother did not farm)
<i>Ulibele kulala</i>	(She sleeps all day)
<i>Gcim fahla!</i>	(Eh, he, he!)
<i>Sewuyabuya</i>	(There, she's coming back)
<i>Nang'esigodzini</i>	(She is by the ditch)

This lullaby orders the baby to be quiet. The singing person addresses the baby as her own by saying *mntfwanami* (my baby). Mamba informs that “a close relationship used to develop between a baby and the nurse-girl such that she even referred to [it] as her own baby” (Mamba, Glory, “Group identity in Swazi oral poetry” in Moyo, Stephen P.C., Sumaili, Tobias W.C., and Moody, James A. *Oral Traditions in Southern Africa: Volume II Aesthetics, Language and Literature* 1986: 188). However, there is a contradiction between the endearing words *mntfwanami* (my baby) and spitefully telling the baby of its mother’s ‘laziness,’ her love for sleep and gallivanting instead of investigating the cause of the cry.

The lullaby is meant to socialize both nurse-girl and baby. Mamba reveals this is “to highlight the operations of cultural education in traditional Swazi society, that a female child had to be trained to be a mother right from the onset” (Mamba 1986: 189). The lullaby is a warning to the girl not to emulate the irresponsible woman who leaves a baby with a nurse-girl and no food when she is a mother.

A baby may sometimes cry not because it is hungry, wet, or ill, but because it wants to be in its mother’s arms. The last two lines of the lullaby hint at this and promise the baby that its mother is coming soon. As a way of using the available forms of performance for their development women use lullabies to instil the kind of ideologies that they deem good for their society instead of repeating what was constructed by people who lived in a different era and experienced different life challenges from them.

### **3.2.2 *Tiphicaphicwano* (Riddles) and Proverbs**

In the past, before radio and television became popular, after the boys had returned from herding cattle, and the evening meal had been taken, both boys and girls used to sit around the fire *edladleni* (in the kitchen) or *kagogo* (in the family sacred hut) and enjoy a session of story telling and riddles. The latter were very popular, and everyone participated so as to sharpen their imaginative skills. The one giving a riddle had to either make up a new one or use one of the ones which had been heard before.

*Nginiphica, nginiphica ngemunfu wami lohamba busuku nemini*  
(I puzzle, I puzzle you with my person who walks day and night).

**Answer:** “a river” because it flows during both day and night.

*Nginiphica, nginiphica ngemunfu wami lowela umfula ugcwele.*  
(I puzzle, I puzzle you with my person who crosses a flooded river).

**Answer:** “eyes” because even if the river is flooded, eyes can see on the other side of the flooded river that cannot be crossed physically.

Sometimes instead of using personification for the subject of the riddle, they used animation or any simple objectification such as in the following:

*Nginiphica, nginiphica, ngenkhabi yami lebovu isesibayeni lesimhlophe.*  
(I puzzle, I puzzle you with my red ox in a white kraal).

**Answer:** a tongue (the red<sup>43</sup> ox) and teeth (the white kraal).

*Nginiphica, nginiphica ngetinkunzi tami letintsanfu tisesibayeni. Lebovu ihlaba lemnyama, lemnyama ihlabe lemhlophe, lemhlophe yece sibaya.*  
(I puzzle, I puzzle you with my three bulls, a red, black and white one. The red one ‘horns’ the black, the black one ‘horns’ the white one which jumps over the kraal).

**Answer:** a flame of fire (the red bull) that heats the bottom of a black pot which has milk inside. The white bull that jumps over the kraal is milk that eventually boils and overflows from the pot.

After the colonial period, when new concepts, objects, people and places became known to the Swazi people, new riddles that featured them were made. The following were made due to the new ideas of church people who wore special gowns for church such as the Zionists<sup>44</sup>; the telephone, which was associated with Queen Victoria<sup>45</sup> and Pretoria<sup>46</sup>; as well as reading and writing:

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<sup>43</sup> In SiSwati colours are named according to primary colours. All shades of red, tan, pink and crimson are classified under red (*kubovu*). Among cattle, tan and brown are also called *bovu* which in English directly translates as red. All shades of green and blue (except light and dark blue) are called *luhlata* which directly translates as green.

<sup>44</sup> Zionists were popular in Swaziland because unlike the churches affiliated with missionaries they accommodated Swazi culture.

<sup>45</sup> Queen Victoria became known to the Swazi people when the country became a British protectorate.

<sup>46</sup> Pretoria was the Capital of The Union of South Africa, after it became the Republic of South Africa.

*Nginiphica, nginiphica ngemaZiyoni ami lagcoko tembatfo letimhlophe nemaduku labubendze. Asesontfweni. Aphuma ngalinye ngalinye angaphindzi abuye, kugcine kungenamuntfu endlini yelisonfho.*

(I puzzle, I puzzle you with a group of Zionist believers who are wearing white church gowns and brown head scarves. They are in their church building. They leave the building one by one and never return until there is no one left in the building).

**Answer:** a box of matches with white match sticks and brown heads. Each used match stick does not return into the match box until the box is empty.

*Nginiphica, nginiphica ngentalantala Victoria!*

*Nginiphica, nginiphica ngentalantala Pitoli.*

(I puzzle, I puzzle you with a long, long Victoria thing)

(I puzzle, I puzzle you with a long, long Pretoria thing)

**Answer:** a telephone post and line.

*Nginiphica, nginiphica ngensimu yami uyilima ngetadla uyivune ngemehlo*

(I puzzle you, I puzzle you with my field which you plant with hands and harvest with eyes).

**Answer:** a letter/ book that you write with hands and read with eyes.

In order to assist the audience to quickly recognize what the subject of the riddle was, the speaker sometimes had to act out some of the clues. Normally that was done when no one could figure out what the subject in question was. These actions and gestures were a way of finally telling the audience the answer. An example of this could be the riddle about a letter or book. The maker of the riddle would make a gesture of writing as he or she said "plant with hands", and then the audience or one of them would shout, "A letter or book!"

Mothers and grandmothers were chief tutors in this performance. Proverbs on the other hand were not necessarily performed like riddles, but were incorporated into the other genres and everyday life. They were used as a way of teaching through correcting and warning people, especially the young about the right conduct in society. It was common practice to use proverbs specifically directed at certain groups such as girls, women, boys and men. The following list exemplifies the socialization of young people, especially girls, through proverbs:



- 1 *Akatalanga wabola ematfumbu* (She did not give birth, her intestines were rotten). This proverb is directed at a woman whose children are a disgrace. Society blames her for failing to raise children who have acceptable behaviour.
- 2 *Kumbophela umtfwalo* (To put together a bundle for her). This is used as threat to make women aware that if a woman's husband or her in-laws are not happy with her, they could return her to her father's house. It can also be used when a woman 'misbehaves' including accusations of witchcraft, of being talkative, complaining or fighting when a man has another lover or has taken another wife.
- 3 *Kumfaka esibayeni* (To put her in the kraal). This proverb is used to express a woman's 'honour' by being put into the family kraal. This is when a woman is taken into the kraal to *mekeza* (married through the *kuteka* (forced marriage). This is called an 'honour' because women are told that their main purpose in life is to marry and bear children.
- 4 *Kuvula phansi kwemphumulo* (to open under the nose). This refers to a woman who is talkative. Society encourages women to be reserved.
- 5 *Kwandza ngemlomo njengelibhakede* (To be wide mouthed like a bucket). This is used to sneer at a talkative woman who does not work as much as she talks.
- 6 *Kusemkhonweni kusetandleni* (It is in the arms, it is in the hands). This is used to refer to a lazy woman who does not work to the level that her in-laws and other people expect her to.
- 7 *Ibanjwa ishisa. Yibambe ishisa* (It held whilst hot. Hold it hot). Society uses this proverb to encourage woman to withstand any kind of pain, saying that a woman should hold any hot object. The hot object symbolises any form of hardship in marriage that a married woman should stand.
- 8 *Wakhahlelwa yimbongolo esifubeni* (She was kicked by a donkey in the chest). This proverb can be use to any member of society who cannot keep secrets, but it is mainly used to sneer at women who tell what they have been told as a secret.
- 9 *Hamba juba; bayokuhlutsa embili!* (Go ahead dove; they will pluck your feathers soon!) This proverb is used to caution someone who does not adhere to advice, such as a young man or woman who runs away from their parents. It means that even if the young ignore the adults and run away, like a dove that flies away, ahead, they will

encounter trouble, which is similar to the plucking of a dove's wings, and they will remember the words of caution and return like a dove whose wings have been plucked off.

Riddles and proverbs are not as popular as they used to be. They have been displaced by television and radio and they face the same threat as *SiSwati* language, which is gradually displaced by English and a mixture of English and *SiSwati* in the cities. The Ministry of Education makes efforts to preserve riddles and proverbs as part of the *SiSwati* curriculum in schools, so they are now well documented in school text books. There are also some programmes on the radio that teach specially selected proverbs. Most of the selected ones are those that instil internalized oppression. They instil in both men and women that women are inferior to men and should talk less and never complain. They discourage assertiveness in women and label negatively any woman who portrays elements of assertiveness.

### **3.2.3 Storytelling: *Tinganekwane* (folktales) and life-stories**

In the past, storytelling involved both men and women. Men's stories were usually more about history while women's were fictional and involved animal characters. As with proverbs and riddles storytelling is also gradually being displaced by radio and television. During the season when there was not much work to do children would ask their *gogo* (grandmother) to tell a story. In the evening, she would sit on a mat near the fire with her audience around her. After she had agreed, absolute silence fell as the children waited expectantly. *Gogo* trained the children to be patient by taking her time before telling her story.

The usual time of traditional performances is in the evening, after the daily chores have been attended to and the family can relax while the children are gradually ready to go to sleep. The place of performance: in the yard or under the stars during the summer, round the family fire on cold winter nights... Traditionally the audience was composed of children - no folktale could be performed if there were no children - but adults could, and indeed did, participate, especially the members or neighbours

of the family (Canonici, Noverino, "The Folktale Tradition Yesterday and Today" in Groenewald, H.C. (ed.) *Oral Studies in Southern Africa* Canonici, 1990: 130, 131).

The audience participated actively, not by only listening, but by making appropriate exclamations and head nodding as the story progressed. There was a special way of starting a story: The storyteller cried: *Kwesukesukela!* (This functioned as 'Once upon a time.') The audience then responded with '*Coyi!*' The storyteller continued: 'There was a certain woman, or man, or girl...' and the audience responded by saying, '*sitampheka ngesigozwagozwane* (we will cook her with a small pot)'. The storyteller then went on to tell the story, repeating some of the phrases, and using expressions such as, 'It went on and on and on and on,' or 'ran and ran and ran until he came to a big river...'

The storyteller had to perform and captivate the attention of the audience, throughout the story or else some of the children would soon fall asleep. She would make bodily gestures and variations of the voice, which was a kind of "sing-song telling...repeating some words and phrases" (Scheub, Harold, *Story* 1998:173.) Isabel Hofmeyr also adds that "the teller and her gestural and dramatic skill co-operated in making the event a multi-dimensional performance" (Hofmeyr, Isabel, "*We spend our Years As A Tale that is told:*" *Oral Historical Narrative in a South Africa Chieftdom* 1993: 29) and most featured songs, or some recurring phrases. Stories about cattle were told to boys, but there were some particular ones which were told to both boys and girls, such as the one about Kalpensi, an invincible bull. In most Swazi folktales cannibals are reputed to eat people but in Kalpensi's story they come to steal cattle from a herd-boy. They want to steal Kalpensi because he is a very fat bull. However, when they tried to drive the bull away, it refuses to move so they threaten to eat the boy instead. The boy sings to make Kalpensi move:

*Awuhambe awuhambe Kalpensi. Uyabona bazokubulala.*  
(Just go, just go Kalpensi. You see they will kill you).  
*Awuhambe awuhambe Kalpensi. Uyabona bazokubulala.*  
(Just go, just go Kalpensi. You see they will kill you).

The boy would sing about five times and then Kalpensi would start walking. The story goes on to state how Kalpensi refused to do almost anything the cannibals wanted him to do, including, crossing a river, and getting into the cannibals' kraal. Each time the bull was ordered to do something it refused and only responded after the boy had sung the song five times. When the cannibals tried to stab and kill the bull it did not die. When they wanted to skin it, cut it to pieces, cook it and eat it, it was hard until the boy sang. In the end after the cannibals had finished eating, the boy put the bull's bones together and started singing:

*Awuvuke, awuvuke yeKalpensi uyabona sebakubulele*  
(Come to life again, come to life again Kalpensi. You see they have killed you).  
*Awuvuke, awuvuke yeKalpensi uyabona sebakubulele*  
(Come to life again, come to life again Kalpensi. You see they have killed you).

After singing this last part the bull became alive again as the cannibals were asleep because of overeating. The boy ran back home with Kalpensi. Children liked this story because of the bull's invincibility, easing them from the sadness at the end, and attaining victory. They also liked it for its song throughout the story. This story made it easier for the children to partially understand the proverb, *babotidla batibeke ematsambo* (they should eat the cattle and spare the bones). This proverb is directed at a girl or woman who is regarded as 'wild'. It means that when her parents receive *lobola* (bride price) cattle for her, they should use them up, but make sure that the cattle can come to life again when her in-laws want them back after she has done something 'scandalous'. In other words the proverb serves as a strategy to make women and girls become submissive so that their parents may not be subjected to the 'shame' of having to return *lobola* (bride price) cattle to their in-laws.

Apart from incorporating song into a story the storyteller puts life into the story by using language that sharpened the imagination of the audience to create an "inner eye" to see the activities within the story (Sirayi 2001: 18). Some of the stories would scare children, so sometimes *gogo* would leave the more scary stories for later when the youngest had fallen asleep.

In addition to using highly descriptive language, the storyteller enhanced her narration with action:

Characters in the story are played by the storyteller. The narration is dramatised by the use of various other theatrical devices (Mzo Sirayi 2001: 16)

Penina Mlama explains how the storyteller managed to enact the parts of various characters in Tanzanian storytelling to the extent of engaging the characters in some dialogue:

A deep voice demonstrates a wicked or frightening character such as a monster, chattering characterises the liar, and mumbling is employed for stupid characters. Voice techniques are used to create the appropriate atmosphere. Whispers or low voices indicate danger; the quickening of the tempo of the voice indicates emergency situations, whereas a slower tempo indicates an atmosphere of relaxation (Mlama, Penina *A Tanzanian Traditional Theatre as Pedagogical Institution: Kaguru Theatre as a Case Study*, PhD Thesis, University of Dar Es Salaam. 1983: 272)

The ability of the storyteller in this regard gave the audience a sense of engagement with the story. They would laugh, cry and sometimes scream. This used to be the case where even animals were involved, such as big snakes like a python which would 'coil itself around its victim, lick them, crush the ribs, and all other bones and swallow them whole'. As *gogo* told such a story she would twist her body like a writhing big snake and make ranting sounds to show the deadliness of the snake. Sometimes the children would huddle together for safety from the snake or any other scary animal or character in the story, as if it was already in the house. This way, as a form of theatre, storytelling managed to entertain the audience. The children were also given an opportunity to re-tell some of the stories and sometimes it became even better when told by one of them. The primary function of storytelling was entertainment but the themes and lessons derived from the stories were educational too.

As an educational device, story telling was and still is significantly gendered. Through stories, society taught about various societal values meant for boys, girls and adults.

Stories exclusively meant for boys were told by men outside at *esangweni*.<sup>47</sup> Those stories were about cattle raiding, wars and other subjects which Swazi people regarded as boys' and men's activities. Girls were told stories that related to relationships, acts of kindness and childcare. It is from this second type of stories that I draw my example.

As I indicated earlier in the second chapter from a very early stage, girls were and are still taught about the importance of marriage to the extent that they grew up thinking life meaningless without it. Stories of lazy girls who end up getting no one to marry were very common. One popular story was the one about a rich prince who wanted a girl to marry. Many girls adorned themselves and wore beautiful clothes and jewels to impress the prince. All the girls failed because along the way before getting to the prince's palace an old woman whose eyes were full of sleep and matted stopped them for help:

*Salukati: Mntfwanemntfwanami awungisite bo.*

(Old woman: Child of my child, please, help me).

*Intfombi: Awungiyekela yesalukati ndzini. Angikwati nekukwati mine.*

(Girl: Hey old woman leave me alone. I don't even know you).

*Salukati: Mntfwanemntfwanami mane ungikhotse nalubhici bo.*

(Old woman: Child of my child, please, clean the sleep dirt from my eyes).

*Intfombi: Yimihlolo yami yini nayi! Awungibuke kahle kutsi. Ucabanga kutsi mine ngingakhotsana nelubhici lwakho loku nginje? Musa kungibambelela nje wena ngoba ngijakele kuyewushada nemntfwanenkhosi nje mine.*

(Girl: Oh my goodness! Look at me carefully. Do you think that beautiful as I am, I can clean your eyes full of sleep and dirt? Don't waste my time. I am in a hurry to marry the king's son).

*Salukati: Hamba juba bayokuhlutsa embili!*

(Old woman: Go ahead dove; they will pluck your feathers soon!)

After all the girls who refused to help the old woman had failed, one day Ntfombisibili<sup>48</sup>, a very kind and obedient girl also embarked on her journey to try her luck with the prince. She was not a beautiful girl at all. She did not even want to go in the first place, but went in obedience to her mother who had persuaded her to. Like all the previous girls, before getting to the palace Ntfombisibili met the old woman. Before the old woman said anything Ntfombisibili greeted her:

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<sup>47</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>48</sup> Ntfombisibili is a girls' name which means 'real girl'.

*Ntfombisibili: Sawubona gogo.*

*(Ntfombisibili: Hello grandmother.)*

*Salukati: Yebo mntfwanemntfwanami.*

*(Old woman: Oh hello, child of my child.)*

*Ntfombisibili: Awu gogo unelubhici! Asengikukhotse bo.*

*(Ntfombisibili: Oh grandmother you have sleep and eye-crusts. Let me clean your eyes.)*

*Salukati: Hawu mntfwanemntfwanami uwakuphi wena lobona mine?*

*(Old woman: Oh child of my child, where are you from, you who can see me?)*

*Ntfombisibili: Awu gogo ngiwangale kwaleta tintsaba leta.*

*(Ntfombisibili: Oh grandmother I am from the other side of those far away mountains.)*

*Salukati: Inkhosi ikubusise ntfombi yami.*

*(Old woman: May the Lord bless you my girl.)*

*Ntfombisibili: Ngiyabonga gogo.*

*(Ntfombisibili: Thank you grandmother.)*

After helping the old woman, Ntfombisibili left and eventually arrived at the palace where the prince married her. Her life changed within a day as she had to live in a beautiful palace, and sleep on a gigantic bed. She could eat and wear whatever she wanted, so she went to get all her people to live in the palace. It is a happy ending story. Such a story makes girls dream about happy marriages. However, it also makes them aspire to marry kings and princes in order to experience social change for the better, giving them the idea that they cannot experience a better life unless they are affiliated to kings and princes or rich men.

In this story beauty is addressed in a very negative way. The story associates beauty with arrogance yet that is not necessarily the case. It also associates lack of beauty with decency and kindness, which is also not necessarily the case. The story places women in absolute positions, where the pretty are bad and insensible people, whereas the 'plain' like Ntfombisibili, are good people.

In an attempt to impress men and elderly women who are custodians of the controlling culture, young women agree to everything men say even when inwardly they may completely disagree. This makes women to have no personal goals, their main goal being to live to please the men in their lives at all costs. The symbolism contained in the story where the old woman asks the girls to clean her dirty eyes by licking them reflects the

extent to which society expects women to humiliate themselves to carry out near inhuman and unhealthy practices in order to attain the acclamation of society and a 'good' name. Girls and women 'kill' themselves with hard work just to impress their husbands and in-laws, and also to make a 'good' name for their own fathers who are honoured for doing a 'good job' in bringing them up. Some women remain in abusive relationships and do not tell anyone because of the lessons from such stories. However, there is a new type of storytelling that women in the country established in the late 1990s.

### 3.2.4 Life Stories: A new form of storytelling

Telling true and personal life stories has always been discouraged among women. The only life stories that were encouraged were the historical ones about battles and war, including the various family histories which are encapsulated in each clan's praises. The most effective strategy of preventing women from telling their life stories was, and still is, the *tibi tendlu* saga, in which the family blames a woman or girl if they tell other people about their personal sad experiences.

In the late 1990s some women defied this custom and established a newspaper column for women in The Weekend Observer<sup>49</sup>. The *Khikhilembube* columnist was Sarah Dupond-Mkhonza<sup>50</sup>. It took the form of an imaginary public address system called *Khikhilembube* 'pocket of the lion king,'

Dupond-Mkhonza encouraged women to come out into the open and tell their stories. The women responded and gave their stories to her. She presented the column in such a way that each story used an imaginary public address system. In their writing, the women faced their abusers and even asked them questions in the presence of the whole nation, telling how they felt about what their abusers did to them. Each woman also stated what she intended to do next as a form of self emancipation from the abuse. The women who contributed articles to the *khikhilembube* column drew their stories from real life

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<sup>49</sup> The Weekend Observer is the Saturday version of the Swazi Observer, one of the two main newspapers of Swaziland.

<sup>50</sup> Sarah Dupond-Mkhonza is a feminist, novelist, short story writer, lecturer and outspoken voice for women's rights in Swaziland.



experiences and fictionalised some parts. One contributor related how her in-laws, especially the women who had had similar experiences to hers accused her of exposing *tibi tendlu* (house dirt) to the entire Swazi nation through the newspaper. She said they only forgave her when she said the *khikhilembube* articles were fictional. The truth of the matter, however, is that all the articles were either stories of personal experiences or were stories written by others in order to protect the identities of the abused. When the column's contract expired, people complained and wanted it to continue. The majority of those were women.

Although the Weekend Observer column did not continue, what it had started was carried on by the Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA) who encouraged abused people to come to their offices and tell their life stories. In a joint effort by agencies such as UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund), SWAGAA, FLAS the stories of the people who have survived abuse were compiled into a document entitled *Inyandzaleyo*<sup>51</sup>. The abused people told their life stories to SWAGAA workers in the privacy of the SWAGAA building. Some of these people were provided with safe accommodation as a way of rescue from their abusers, who included their parents, relatives and spouses.

Some of the life stories reflect conflicting statements which, after further interrogation reveal that the individuals are torn between speaking the truth and accepting the consequences. Abused women continually live in fear.

The story of Tsabi<sup>52</sup> who was married according to the Customary Rites reveals how she went through abuse by a husband who brought another woman into their bedroom and ordered Tsabi, his wife to sleep on the floor. She relates how her husband abused her in front of the other woman:

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<sup>51</sup> *Inyandzaleyo* is a Siswati expression for raising an alarm for help. It is normally used when someone believes he or she will be killed if no one comes to help. Such may be the case when two people are fighting or when a man is beating his wife and she believes he will kill her if no one stops him.

<sup>52</sup> Tsabi's story is entitled "The traumas of a traditional marriage: Tsabi's story" is from James Hall's *Inyandzaleyo* (2003: 73-75)

He got up, and started boasting about his culture, his Swaziness. He said if I had problems, I should just pack and go... He was threatening me in a bad way. I knew that if I did not please him he could use his power to take my children away from me. He had a weapon to use against me anytime he wanted. There was nothing I could do. It is not like I could divorce him and seek custody of the children Hall, James, *Inyandzaleyo* 2003: 74-75).

Tsabi's story reflects how women who have married according to Customary Rites marriage are forced to do as the men say because the law does not protect them. If they leave the man they could be forced to part from their children, who, by Swazi law are a man's property. There is no correlation between abuse and the type of marriage, because cases of abuse are reported in both Customary and Civil Rites marriages. One would expect the Civil Rites marriage which has clearly written rules to be exempted, but many women within Civil Rites marriages suffer silently because of the overriding expectation of society. Also, some women fear their families, who guard against behaviour that may give a 'bad' name to the family. Sibongile's<sup>53</sup> story reflects that even those married according to the Civil Rites based on the Roman-Dutch law experience similar traumas because of family members who do not allow marriage breakdown, especially if *lobola* (bride price) was paid. S bongile relates how her husband boasted of his culture when she wanted to divorce him because of his infidelity and failure to support the family:

Maybe you have forgotten who you are. As for me I know my roots very well. I am Zulu and I am Swazi<sup>54</sup>. In my culture there is nothing like a man being unfaithful. If you think your education has turned you white, you are mistaken because I am not even going to sign any divorce papers from you. Remember also that those children are mine<sup>55</sup>.

S bongile told her own family about the abuse she was suffering but they would not hear anything she said. Her mother even said "Are you the first woman to share a man. *Uyahlanya wena! Ngulemfundvo lesakunika yona lena lekwenta utikhohlwe kutsi uyini?* (You are mad! Is it the education we gave you that makes you forget who you are?") Her

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<sup>53</sup> Sibongile is a woman from Manzini. With tears, she shared her story with us, her close friends during her days of extreme trauma.

<sup>54</sup> S bongile's husband was a Zuluman who grew up in Swaziland because his father, originally from Zululand followed his wife and settled in Swaziland where she was born.

<sup>55</sup> S bongile tearfully related her stories to her friends seeking help.

story demonstrates that as long as a woman is within a society that oppresses women, she cannot easily free herself from an oppressive relationship. Although she wanted to divorce her husband, Sbongile chose not to, in order to live in harmony with her own family and not lose her children.

A majority of the abused people who tell their stories in *Inyandzaleyo* relate how their own families did not believe them and said they were liars. This is the case in the story of a girl called Futhi who was sexually abused by her father, but whose own family accused her of lying<sup>56</sup>. Most of the stories also show society's indifference towards the suffering of young children, especially girls. Most of the victims of rape and incest are damaged for life, and deprived of growing children's normal experiences. Some fall pregnant and abandon the baby because there is no way they could look after a baby when they themselves need looking after. The following testimonies from the life stories in James Hall's *Inyandzaleyo* show the immensity of the havoc caused by abuse in the lives of women and children:

1. I am HIV positive. I got it from my boyfriend. I help abused people because I want to do something positive with what is left of my life... A lot of teenage girls who have been abused want to commit suicide... The days are over when there is a problem in a family, the elders sit down to find a solution. Now everybody is split up. Girls who live alone with their fathers are in danger a lot of times. Not all Swazi men do this, but too many do because there is a sort of mentality at work. It comes from the men always expecting to be sexually serviced by women... The girls come. They are so traumatised. Their bones have been broken, in some cases they bleed from their private parts... ("A calling and a crusade, Counselling Abuse Survivors: Rose's Story.")

2. I was sleeping in my own bed. My father came to my bed. He didn't speak to me. He was not wearing clothes. I asked him what he was doing. He didn't say anything. He beat me. He beat me because I was resisting him... I was scared. I was hurting. I screamed. Nobody heard me... He raped me... I went to visit my mother at the end of term. She asked me why my breasts were so big... I told her what my father did. She was very angry. She went to the police ("Beating before incest: Ntombi's story.")

3. My family blames me for father being in prison. They said it wasn't him that raped me. They believed my father and not me. They told me "*unemanga*" ("You

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<sup>56</sup> The Story of Futhi entitled "Blaming the Victim" (32-35) is in Hall, James (2003) *Inyandzaleyo* South Africa: Creda Communications (for UNICEF).

are a liar!”) I was 13 when my father raped me. After it happened, I repeated grade six three times. This thing that happened to me disturbed my mind very much...I wanted to go with my mother. But my father was refusing... (“Blaming the victim: Futhi’s story”)

4. God does not love me. I killed a baby. He did not like me before. He took away my parents, and put me with people who beat me. They abused me. They didn’t treat me like a human being. My boyfriend was not my boyfriend anymore when I told him I was preg [pregnant]. He ran away. I left the baby by the road. I didn’t want to kill the baby. I was leaving him for someone to find... When they told me about the dogs I was shocked... The newspapers blamed me. They said I was a mother who killed her baby. That’s not true. I was never a mother to that baby... (“Why I killed my baby: Nomsa’s story”)

5. The other woman did not marry. She stayed with him at *Nkopolo* [a compound where labourers live]. I was expected by my husband to do new [additional] chores. I herded his cattle as well as brewed traditional beer for him... He would belittle me and insult me... (Traumas of a traditional marriage: Tsabi’s story”).

Telling these life stories on its own is not a solution to the problem facing women and girls in the country, but it is a forum for addressing the problem. It is a gigantic step towards the development of women, because even mere speaking about some of the issues in these stories is taboo in the culture of the people. The girls and women who tell their life stories are breaking the culture of silence which had bound many women in the past who would rather die without telling anyone their traumas than tell and face the blame from society. Crying for help did not help some of the victims of abuse because no one heeded their cry as the case has been for Tsabi, who states that when her husband beat her she cried for help but no one helped her, “I called out for help. His girl friend was in the next room with two of his friends. But no one rescued me. He only stopped when he was tired” (Hall 2003: 77).

These life stories do not only reflect experiences of women, but also social representations and cultural values. They demonstrate that there is tension between the self and society. The collaboration of counsellors such as Rose<sup>57</sup> SWAGAA, UNICEF and all other anti abuse bodies ease the tension between society and victims of abuse. This collaboration is also a contributing factor towards the development of women

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<sup>57</sup> Rose is a counsellor who told her life story (Hall 2000: 28-31)

because of the structures that have resulted from it such as creation of 'the halfway house'<sup>58</sup> and foster parents who look after the abused children.

This new genre of story telling is not limited to grandmothers as the main story tellers, and young children as the audience, but it is relevant to everyone in society. The people who tell their life stories in *Inyandzaleyo* include even young boys and some men, such as is the case in prisons where men have been victims of sexual abuse by other men<sup>59</sup>. Telling life stories is not just about the stories of abuse; women tell one another motivational stories that help other women take it upon themselves to change their own lives for the better. An example of this is the story by Rose, the counsellor, who turned her experience of abuse to help other abused people. Some women tell stories of how they worked their way out of poverty, and these can motivate their audiences.

Swazi folktales have been remodelled to suit the modern life the people live, and also to change the value system providing young people with broadmindedness and value for people without focusing on gender as the old folktales did. The genre of storytelling is not the only strategy that women use. They use praise poetry to reverse from instilling oppressive ideas to liberating ones.

### 3.2.5 *Tibongo* (Praise poetry)

In Swaziland, as elsewhere among the Nguni people, *tibongo* are associated with royalty and figures of authority. "Zulu praise poetry is a form that is in many ways closely related to both power and patriarchy" (Gunner, Liz, "Clashes of interest: gender, status and power in Zulu praise poetry" in Furniss, Graham and Gunner, Liz (eds.) *Power, Marginality and African Oral Literature* 1995: 185). Among the Swazi, the power also rests in the fact that according to Swazi religion, people do not 'die' because often after death, an individual still exists in another form. It is very common to hear people talking of *labaphasi* (the 'down ones' or ancestors). The ancestors have a role in the lives of the

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<sup>58</sup> A halfway house is a home where abused children get refuge. They are hidden away from their abusive families and get support and love in order to address the damage already done to them by the abuse.

<sup>59</sup> "Doing nothing to save Lives: Sibusiso's story," is about sexual abuse among inmates.

living, so it was through their praises that the 'gone kings' were brought back to life as in the praises gathered from some Zulu *izimbongi*:

*Kuyawufa abantu kusale izibongo*

*Yizo eziyawusala zibadabudabula*

*Yizo eziyowusala zibalilela emanxiweni*

(People will die, praises will remain.

They will remain and grieve them.

They will lament for them in their old deserted homes (Whitaker, Richard, "Pindar and the *Imbongi*: Fictions of Praise in Sienaert, E.R., Bell, and A.N. and Lewis, M. (eds.) *Oral Tradition and Innovation: new wine in old bottles?* 1991: 245)

The poet, here, relates how even after the death of a person the praises remain, and make his presence felt. Praises, mainly for kings, make it easy for people to experience the presence of *labaphasi* (ancestors) whom they believe to be their overseers. "In the very sense your praises were you, or at least your social identity and they constituted that part of yourself which survived your physical death" (Whitaker 1991: 245). In Swazi, a king's *timbongi* praise him. Other *emajaha* (men) say their own praises or those of other *emajaha* (men). Almost anything of value earns praises to the Swazi and, "everything can be praised in Swazi culture" (Ginindza, Thoko, *Tibongo temakhosi netetindlovikati* 1977: 1). Spans of oxen are praised by their owner as he ploughs his field. Nowadays even buses are praised! "*Tibongo tibukhwa eSwatini* (praises are a big thing in Swaziland)" (ibid).

### 3.2.5.1 Kings' Praises

When Swazi people talk of *tibongo* (praises) they mean the noble genre that is performed mainly for kings. Before the king comes out to address the nation, it is announced that 'the sun is about to rise' implying that the king is the sun. The two main venues where the king addresses the people are *esibayeni* (at the kraal) and at the Somhlolo National Stadium. *Sibaya* (the kraal) is mainly used for traditional gatherings such as the *incwala* ceremony, *lusekwane* (little incwala) ceremony, *umhlanga* dance ceremony, receiving *emaganu* (marula beer) from *lutsango*, *lutsango's umhlanga* dance, addressing *emabutfo* and making announcements such as naming a new Prime Minister, or demoting any official deserving that. The national stadium is mainly for celebrations such as the

Independence Day, King's Birthday, Somhlolo Festival of Praise, and more corporate celebrations.

In both venues, *esibayeni* (at the kraal) and the national stadium there are *tendlalelo* (preliminary activities), which take place before the king arrives. At the national stadium, these activities are in the form of singing and dancing, drum majorettes, drama, drilling and bands by the three defence forces, Ubutfo Defence Force (soldiers), The Royal Swaziland Police and His Majesty's Correctional Services Staff. The people know the king is about to come when they hear his *imbongi* (praise poet) filling the air with his *tibongo*. The atmosphere changes and becomes filled with majestic, royal whistling and outbursts of praises from *timbongi* in various parts of the gathering. As he approaches his podium, the whole place is filled with awed shouting and a particular kind of regal whistling, that is accentuated with the phrase *Phuma langa sikotse* (Rise up sun, and let us bask in your presence and get your warmth). As the king settles, eventually, the shouting and whistling subside a little and one by one, the *timbongi* cease, until only the main *imbongi*, continues.

The praises are about the king's extraordinary achievements. For example in the praises of the late King Sobhuza II there is the line: *Mahlasela nge peniseli, tonkhe tive tihlasela ngesikhali...* (You who attacks with a pencil when all nations attack with spears...) This is about the king's ability to diplomatically deal with issues, using his education rather than fighting as the case was when a majority of African countries fought for their independence such as Swaziland's neighbour, Mozambique.

The praises of the present king Mswati III reveal information about his general physical appearance, as well as his experiences. Before Mswati's coronation there were squabbles surrounding the throne. The young king was sent to England to be schooled in preparation for his position as king. These extracts from his praises inform more about the king:

*Mswati lomnyama kulabalutfuli;  
Wena lowacambindlela nalapho ingekho khona.*

*Ngitjengiseni lokwalako ngitemlungisa...*  
*IMamba lendze lemansongonsongo;*  
*Wena longayembatsi ingubo lowembatsa sikhumba sengwenyama;*  
*Wena lowachamel'enkhome ni waphindze wachamela nasemntfwini*  
 (Mswati, the black one among the dusty ones;  
 You, who started a pathway where there was none;  
 Show me anyone who does not want you so that I may deal with him  
 The long, long black Mamba snake that is coil upon coil;  
 You who does not use a blanket but the skin of a he-lion  
 You who urinated on a beast and also urinated on a human being...)

King Mswati's *tibongo* reflect that his *imbongi* and his people perceive him as an extraordinary achiever by being the 'only black person among white people.' The king was not the only black person when he studied in England, but as part of *tibongo* (praises) there is an exaggeration of facts. The king is likened to the deadly, black Mamba snake which strikes once and kills its target. The *SiSwati* term *lendze* means both long and tall, which can mean the king's height as well as his 'sacred skills' which cannot be easily understood by common people as it is 'coil upon coil'. He does not keep himself warm with a blanket, a product of wool from a harmless creature, a sheep, but covers himself with the skin of a dangerous animal, a male lion. Before getting the skin of the lion he must fight and kill it. That is a sign of extraordinary bravery and strength. His deed of urinating on both animals and humans is a sign of being fearless of any living being. People would only be confident in a leader that is fearless and ready to protect them. The *imbongi* accords to the king these attributes.

### 3.2.5.2 Praises for *emabutfo* (regiments)

Apart from praises of individual *emajaha* (young men), there are praises for the various regiments. All the members of each regiment *bavukwa lusinga* (get highly inspired and empowered), whenever someone recites *tibongo* of their regiment. My own father, Cwatha James Dlamini was a member of the *Malindane* (the waiting ones) or *Lindimpi* (those who wait, expecting war), and I can still visualise his reaction whenever the radio programme "*Emuva sasentani* (What were we doing in the past)?" was introduced using the *Lindimpi* praises. He would spring into action even in our own living room, or sometimes make bodily movements even whilst still seated.



*Igilamafoni iyakhala,  
Ikhal'igijima  
Igilamafoni iyakhala,  
Ikhal'igijima  
(The gramophone, it is crying  
Crying as it runs!  
The gramophone, it is crying  
Crying as it runs!*

These praises make every member of the *Lindimpi* regiment think highly of themselves, as achievers. Every man who had a strong sense of belonging to the regiment would get into the mood of a winner as the praises are recited. The *ligwalagwala* is a bird associated with the Swazi royalty. Its feathers are worn on big ceremonies of great national significance only by the king and his children and those brothers and aunts from earlier kings (see appendix 14). *Bomgamfemfe* (the robust, able-bodied ones), is well positioned, as an indicator of the fact that the regiments count themselves as part of the throne because they form the supporting structure. Such *tibongo* were for men. On the other hand, poems, or chants about women, girls and children (of course, sung by them too)<sup>60</sup>, merely inform us of their positions and activities in society, and sounding like an obedient response to the orders of traditional society.

### 3.2.5.3 Praises of royal women

Apart from the king, other important individuals, predominantly men, who do 'extraordinary' deeds, eventually earn themselves praises. As a result, the genre has spread to more people. For instance the king's *tindvuna*, (advisers and ministers) are praised for what they have done. Women do not have *timbongi*, except for the Queen Mother, a few women such as *emakhosikati* (the king's wives), and the older princesses, because of their affiliation with the king or because of their personal achievements. For instance Queen Labotsibeni, the late King Sobhuza II's grandmother was known for being very 'hard headed', refusing to give in to the interference of the royal advisers who were against her sending the young King Sobhuza II to school. Her deed earned her the negative name Gwamile, which means someone, especially something which is too hard to tenderise, no matter how much it is boiled or cooked. Her 'praises,' *Mgwam*

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<sup>60</sup> See the section 3.2.6.4) women's chants.

*longavutfwa netiko!* (The hard one that cannot even be cooked) is more of a mockery than praise - but then praises included words of ridicule to a ruler.

Women have now started to force their way into this poetic territory which has been reserved for men until now. For instance Glory Mamba, a talented poet earned herself the special opportunity of reciting the praises of King Mswati III at his coronation, in 1986. In an open search for people who could come up with the best *tibongo* for the new king, she came among the top *timbongi* identified by the organisers of the coronation. The selection was made by a panel which had to consider the excellence and relevance of the *tibongo* to the experiences of the young king. On the coronation day, the *tibongo* by Mamba were among the best and she presented them herself. On that day many countries were represented, and a woman citing the king's *tibongo* gave Swaziland a good reputation as a gender sensitised country. This did not last long because in Swaziland *tibongo* are a highly gendered form of performance. Today Mamba does not even feature at all when the king makes an appearance and *timbongi* start announcing and ushering him in with their praises. This is yet another example of gender inequalities in the country.

Apart from hailing kings, praises were, and still are, used to reprimand the kings about undesirable deeds: "praises are also the expression of public opinion and provide an effective means of social control," (Cope, Trevor, *Izibongo: Zulu Praise-poems* 1968: 21). *Timbongi* need to be people who are bold enough to stand up to their words even when they get challenged for the praises they have made. Being an *imbongi* is risky, "*Izimbongi* from Shaka's time on, have often paid with their lives for being 'on the wrong side'" (Gunner 1999: 52.)

#### **3.2.5.4 Ordinary women invading the male genre**

Despite all the many complaints from 'traditionalists', a number of women in Swaziland now practice praise poetry. The Annual Somhlolo Festival of Praise, a commemoration of King Somhlolo's dream is a national celebration in which women say praises without any prohibitions. At the peak of the celebration, and in the presence of the king, many young

women sing, act, and recite praise poems about the Christian faith. Some women, such as Nonkululeko Mdluli have displayed an extraordinary skill of making up and reciting the praises of Jesus Christ using His experiences as recorded in the Bible, which is a trait of *timbongi*, when they “express a wide range of ideas in a highly artistic way” (Mamba 1986: 4). In schools, more and more girls now recite poems on important days such as the Speech and Prize giving day. On such days, girls recite the praises of Queen Labotsibeni as a motivation force for, and to, women. Women and girls compose and sing praise poetry to address what they cannot address by mere speech.

### **3.2.5.5 Praises of defiant women**

In the pre-colonial era, however women would have their own praises recited openly within their own private spaces, especially after completing a certain task such as weeding or harvesting. The woman whose fields have been completed would start reciting her own praises to highlight her achievements. This kind of performance was very private compared to the contemporary one and was confined to spaces set for women only. Men did not hear the women’s praises. As a woman recited her praises she would be doing the *giya* dance. Gunner and Gwala define the *giya* dance as a wild and flamboyant display of acrobatics and athletics, but it is more than this because ‘to *giya*’, is not simply to make the physical movements, but is more about the emotions that accompany the movement. Doing the *giya* dance is an expression of excitement and enthusiasm, which goes hand in hand with being positive about one’s own identity. Brian du Toit associates ‘to *giya*’ with the performance of “war-like dance” (Du Toit, Brian M, *Content and Context of Zulu Folk-Narratives* 1976:12). This shows a confident person who feels capable of dealing with whatever challenge they may face. The following praises<sup>61</sup>, from women of Hlabisa area in Kwa Zulu Natal, have these qualities of confidence on the side of the performers.

#### **MaJele’s praises**

*I am she who cuts across the game reserve*

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<sup>61</sup> These praises are already translated from Zulu into English.

*That no girl crosses.  
I am the boldest of the bold, out-facer of wizards.  
Obstinate perseverer.  
The nation swore at me and ate their words.  
She cold-shoulders kings and despises mere commoners.*

### **MaCele's Praises**

*What is smelling at Zenzele?  
The pepper is smelling.  
The pepper is words that stab,  
They carry spears and arrows,  
They stab at the husband's heart  
And they stab at his in-laws' home as well.*

(Gwala, Mefika and Gunner, Liz, *MUSHO! Zulu Popular Praises* 1991: 211 &

213)

These praises indicate how assertive these women are. For instance, MaJele is conscious of her audaciousness marked by doing what other women would not dare. Her "cutting across the game reserve that no girl crosses" signifies that she is not afraid to invade spaces that society has reserved for men only. She is bold enough to pursue what she wants regardless of the gender boundaries. She brags of being jeered by the nation, but having the final word concerning her own life. MaJele's praises show her disregard for the labelling that society gives to women who do not conform to societal expectations. Some contemporary women emulate boldness similar to MaJele's and disregard the negative labels society gives to women who refuse to be controlled. These praises also show that it is possible to ignore society's labels and live the empowered life every woman desires.

In her praises, MaCele compares herself with pepper, which illustrates how she makes her presence felt by those who interact with her. Like the sharp and stinging taste of pepper she 'stings' her husband and in-laws in a way that other women would not. Nguni women including the Zulu and the Swazi are encouraged to be reserved and not talk too much. This reserved nature is mainly to be applied when a woman interacts with her in-laws. MaCele's praises reflect that she does not comply with this expectation. She speaks her mind if there is a need. A woman is not expected to have 'a mind of her own' as a 'minor.' MaCele refuses to be controlled, and says what she feels she has to say.

The performance of an individual's praises is not just solo, because the participant 'audience' assists the performer by responding to the praises by exclaiming, '*Musho!*' (Tell about him!), which means tell more about this person or '*Yebo*' (yes, we agree). These evoke further praises from the performer.

### 3.2.5.6 Praises as genealogies

There is yet another type of praise poems, which is focused on the use of surnames or family names and which contain the history of the various clans. It is considered a good thing for all women to know as many praise names as possible, because when married they are encouraged to use praise names in addressing their husbands and in-laws, as the use of the praise names reflects the women's submissiveness. When a girl is born it is as if a foreigner has been born because it is expected that she will move away and find another home. To prepare a girl for her future occupation as a wife, her mother teaches her the family praises. Boys are also taught the praises but for different reasons; particularly to give them family histories and to instil a strong sense of belonging to their clans with pride in their origins. A majority of clans are associated with animals, and the boys think of themselves as possessing the positive attributes of the animals.

Examples of these are:

*Dvuba* (zebra), *Nyamatane* (wild beast)...;  
*Ndlovu* (elephant)  
*Nkhomo* (cow)  
*Nkhabindze* (tall ox)  
*Nyamane* (edible caterpillar)

Some of the family praises reflect the journey the family founder went through before settling in Swaziland. The leading one of these histories is the Dlamini clan<sup>62</sup>, with "*Wena wacedza Lubombo ngekuhlehetela*" (You, who climbed the Lubombo mountain easily). Whenever a cow had been slaughtered, especially in honour of the ancestors, at the end of the feast, everyone there would say the family praises, following one leading

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<sup>62</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.2.10 Kinship and Swazi clans.

family elder. Everyone, including women and children, would follow the leader, assuming various pitches of voices in a sing song and chant-like manner:

Leader: Ntshangase!  
Everyone: Ntshangase!  
Leader: Mgazi!  
Everyone: Mgazi  
Leader: Sobethu!  
Everyone: Sobethu!  
Leader! Sontopho!  
Everyone: Sontopho!  
Leader: Somlambo!  
Everyone: Somlambo!  
Leader: Mahamule!  
Everyone: Mahamule!  
Leader: Bhuhhula ndaba namhla lingenandaba...  
Everyone: Bhuhhula ndaba namhla lingenandaba...

After the praises, one of them starts singing a chant or an *ingadla* (stomp dance) song, and the celebration continues.

As a way of concluding my discussion of the *tibongo* form of performance women have begun to manipulate the genre for their development by constructing their own *tibongo* to generally celebrate their lives and achievements. Instead of focussing on negative experiences the women assert themselves by concentrating on the positive aspects of their lives. Before examining songs and dance I discuss chants because they serve as a bridge between praises and songs.

### 3.2.6 *Tigcumshelo* (Chants)

Chants were a genre performed in rural settings, by men and women during work to make the work bearable. Children sang their own chants during playtime. The chants for various groups of society served different purposes. Although chants were more popular in the past, people still perform some during communal gatherings. However, this is very rare<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> Broadcasters from the *emsakatweni* (Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services) go to the communities whenever there are communal gatherings to record the performances and save them in

### 3.2.6.1 Men's chants

Most of men's chants were used for work purposes. When men had a heavy task to perform, such as lifting a heavy object, or digging, they chanted to get some rhythm and therefore not feel the weight of the task. A common chant for men is "*dikilani madvodza!* (lift up men!):

Leader: *Dikilani Madvodza!* - Gentlemen lift it up!

The rest: *Hhayi! Siyadikila mane kulukhuni!* - Oh yes we are lifting, but it is difficult!

The leader: *Wota naye!* – Bring him over!

The rest: *Umntfu lomkhulu sita naye!* – We are bringing the heavy man!

The leader: *Cukula zasha!* – Lift it! Oh lift it!

The rest: *Emkhondvo kunenala!* –At Mkhondo<sup>64</sup> there is plenty of food!

The essence of this last chant is in the heavy task that the participants have to carry out. The leader urges them to carry out the task, and the rest of them agree in one voice that they will do it even though it is hard. This chant in particular is representative of the joint effort strategy, which is employed through *lilima* (communal work party). Tackling work this way enables the participants to do more work than they would individually. The words or themes of the songs also invigorate the participants to work more and focus on the enjoyment of the song and therefore achieve more through team work. The enjoyment of singing and dancing releases physical tensions. There are also times when men, women and children sing and dance together, and these are *imitsimba* (weddings), *tibhimbi* (festivals), national ceremonies, and even funerals, although children are exempted from the last.

Some of the men's chants are about modern objects such as the gramophone which was popular during the colonial era, when those who went to South African mines brought them home in great numbers. One particular chant that helped men do more work when

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archives because the practice of communal gathering is dying away due to changing lifestyles, as more people leave rural areas for urban ones.

<sup>64</sup> Mkhondvo is one of the five big rivers of Swaziland. The area by the river is also called Mkhondvo, and in the past, it was famous for producing plentiful food.

weeding, digging kraal manure or even walking as a team is the one called 'igilamafoni' (gramophone):

*Igilamafoni iyakhala,*  
*Ikhal'igijima*  
*Igilamafoni iyakhala,*  
*Ikhal'igijima*  
(The gramophone, it is crying  
Crying as it runs!  
The gramophone, it is crying *Igilamafoni iyakhala,*  
*Ikhal'igijima*  
*Igilamafoni iyakhala,*  
*Ikhal'igijima*  
(The gramophone, it is crying  
Crying as it runs!  
The gramophone, it is crying  
Crying as it runs!  
  
Crying as it runs!

### 3.2.6.2 Herd-boys' Chant

Boys' chants are motivational and about greatness. From a very early age in life men encourage boys to think of themselves as great achievers in whatever they do. One popular chant for boys is *Kelukelwane* (thin legged bird):

<i>Kelu, kelu ndlov'enduna</i>	(Thin legs, thin legs, He-elephant)
<i>Ungibona longingaka</i>	(You see me thin like this)
<i>Ngingangendlov'enduna</i>	(I am as big as a he-elephant)

This chant is used when boys are learning to hunt. The boys' first hunting experience is with birds and this chant is used to mesmerise the birds. The boy repeatedly chants the words in a way that sounds sweet and lures the bird to its entrapment and marches rhythmically encircling the bird which he then catches as it still enjoys the sweet music. The chant also reveals the social status of males in the Swazi society. Men are supposed to be powerful, and emulate the strength of an elephant. The ultimate duty of men was to be victorious, so as each boy sang he perceived himself as the he-elephant, big in size and strong. Chants like this one instil a 'winner mentality' on the young boys who therefore become determined to succeed in their life.



### 3.2.6.3 Children's chants

Although children's chants were mainly about simple play, some of them were directed only at girls, as a way to caution them against unbecoming behaviour, in the form of having boyfriends. The following chant intends to make girls despise the idea of a woman having an extra marital relationship:

Leader: <i>Koboyi Koboyi</i>	(Koboyi, Koboyi)
Chorus: <i>Yekoboyi</i>	(Hey Koboyi!)
Leader: <i>Unyok'uyephi</i>	(Where is your mother?)
Chorus: <i>YeKoboyi</i>	(Hey you Koboyi!)
Leader: <i>Uyekujuma</i>	(She is sleeping with a boy friend)
Chorus: <i>Yekoboyi</i>	(Hey you, Koboyi!)
Leader: <i>Emajaheni</i>	(Where the men are)
Chorus: <i>Yekoboyi!</i>	(Hey you, Koboyi!)
Leader: <i>Abuye nesisu</i>	(She will return pregnant)
Chorus: <i>YeKoboyi!</i>	(Hey you, Koboyi!)
Leader: <i>Atale umntfwana</i>	(She will give birth to a baby)
Chorus: <i>YeKoboyi!</i>	(Hey you, Koboyi!)
Leader: <i>Ambeke etjeni</i>	(She will put it on a rock)
Chorus: <i>YeKoboyi!</i>	(Hey you, Koboyi!)
Leader: <i>Adliwe timphetfu</i>	(The baby will be eaten by worms)
Chorus: <i>Ye Koboyi!</i>	(Hey you, Koboyi!)

### 3.2.6.4 Women's Chants

In women's chanting, one of the women dances as the others sit or stand around her and clap their hands to enhance her dancing

Leader: <i>Nans'indvodz' ingishaya bo!</i>	(Here's a man beating me ah!)
Chorus: <i>Mushaye ndvodza!</i>	(Beat her harder, man!)
Leader: <i>Iv'emagam'ekutjelwa bo!</i>	(He hears rumours ah!)
Chorus: <i>Mushaye ndvodza!</i>	(Beat her harder man!)
Leader: <i>Iv'emagam'ekutjelwa bo!</i>	(He hears rumours ah!)
Chorus: <i>Mushaye ndvodza!</i>	(Beat her harder man!)

The woman who sings the leading role in this chant represents a woman who is crying out to society for help because her husband beats her. The chant does not state the cause for the woman to be beaten, but whatever it is, the response of the chorus indicates that

the other women do not sympathise with her. The women who sing the chorus serve as the voice of society. The woman who is beaten is crying out for help, and she states that she is punished for a crime she has not committed. She states that it is all rumour, but no one takes heed of her crying voice. The other women, who could obviously be the next victims, if anyone decides to spread a rumour about them, whether true or false, shout out loud, 'beat her harder man!' It is easy to blame them, but an examination of what society instils into women from as early an age as infancy, reflects that these women are trying to impress the men and win their favour. Culturally, women do not challenge their beating but are satisfied with trying to fit in and be acceptable to society.

Part of this mentality is caused by the fact that most women were in polygamous marriages. This next chant also reflects the life of women in a polygamous marriage:

*Ungaboyiphakela indvodza ingakalali kakho*  
(Don't dish for a man when he has not slept in your own house)  
*Ungaboyiphakela indvodza ingakalali kakho*  
(Don't dish for a man when he has not slept in your own house)

This chant expresses the conflict that occurs within a woman whose husband is a polygamist or has multiple sexual partners. There is a debate within her whether to give him food when he has been with another woman or not. Swazi people do not publicly talk about sex related issues and tend to cover up their messages in special codes designed by society which Swazi adults only can understand. Sex is sometimes referred to as food. A woman who serves her husband well sexually is said to be a 'good cook'. This chant therefore has a second meaning which expresses the internal conflict within a woman, whether to allow her husband to have sex with her or not when he has been with another woman.

Normally a woman who has been left by her husband for another woman would feel neglected, but this chant subverts the situation to accord empowerment to the woman. The other women tell her not to allow the man to use her just whenever it suits him. The women advise the other woman as a sign of solidarity with her. The trouble with this

advice is that it makes matters worse for a neglected woman, who may lose her husband's affection. Women demonstrate solidarity in matters of economy to subvert the practice of men expecting to drink beer brewed by women drink without paying:

**Leader:** *Tjwala busembizeni kaLaMhlongo!*

**Others:** *Ayidle phasi!*

**Leader:** *Tjwala busembizeni kaLaMhlongo!*

**Others:** *Ayidle phasi!*

**(Leader:** Beer is in a pot at LaMhlongo's place

**Others:** Money first!

**Leader:** Beer is in a pot at LaMhlongo's place

**Others:** Money first!)

The women are praising LaMhlongo who is known for her good hand at brewing beer, but they also echo in one voice calling for the men to pay first before they could have the beer. This kind of solidarity among women is also found among co-wives within a polygamous family. The neglected wives come together to complain against a man who treats his wives unequally. In this chant the women address their home politics:

**Women together:** *Abanye basuz'izinkwa. Thina sisuz'itye*

(Others fart bread, but we fart tea)

In this chant the women are complaining to their husband who does not support his wives equally. Women show this kind of solidarity as a protest on behalf of one another for various reasons using songs. I discuss more of these in the next section about songs and dance.

In conclusion, the chants I have discussed here illustrate how women can demonstrate their internalized oppression as well as challenge and subvert the oppressive measures imposed on them by the patriarchal society. Instead of ridiculing one another using chants, women encourage one another instilling the idea that positive change is possible for them and can be engineered by them.

### 3.2.7 Songs and dance

Singing and dancing are almost inseparable in the life of the Swazi people, and they form

part of people's everyday life. They sing when they are happy and they also sing when there is mourning. Singing forms an important part of Swazi life because for almost every aspect of life there are songs, such as in weddings, funerals, festivals, working in the fields, and many other occasions:

Songs are composed about anything that concerns the everyday lives of the participants...[they] function as a means of arousing participants and creating the right mood for involvement in some kind of activity, whether it be dancing, fighting or a work group preparing for a task (Larham 1985: 52).

People eventually believe whatever they continually hear and so singing is even more influential than stories.

When people sing songs they have not deeply thought about they sometimes end up with conflicting feelings because what they keep singing and hearing may not always align with what they want or believe on their own. Women sing their *tingoma* (songs) "at every special event" and, "the songs reveal the identities of people: both with stable identities and those in identity crisis... [They are] expressions of deeper internal conflicts that exist in society (Dupond-Mkhonza 2003: 51). Some of the wedding songs that women sing exemplify this conflict, because alongside glorifying the married state that the first song portrays, the second song sounds a note of caution:

1. *Shanyelani amabala zingane...*Sweep the ground children  
*Nangu umakoti ezongena.....*Here is the bride about to enter  
*Eza nodumo lwakhe .....*She comes in her glory  
*Ephethe amashoba ngezandla...*She is carrying a switch with her hand ...

2. *Aniboyigcina, aniboyigcina, aniboyigcina lentandane*  
(Please keep safely, keep safely, keep safely, this orphan)  
*Kusasa nizothi uyeba, nithi uyathakatha*  
(Tomorrow you will say she steals. You will say she is a witch)  
*Nithi udla amacanda umakoti*  
(You will say this bride steals eggs.)

3. *Ngihambile ngefika kamkhatsali*  
*Ekwendzen!*  
*Ngihambile ngefika kamkhatsali*

*Ekwendzeni!*  
*Laph' emabel'akhon'adliwa ngekucehwa*  
*Ekwendzeni!*  
*Laph' emabel'akhon'adliwa ngekwebiwa*  
*Ekwendzeni!*  
 (I have travelled and have arrived to a place where you can't help being tired  
 -in marriage  
 I have travelled and have arrived to a place where you can't help being tired  
 -in marriage  
 Where the only way you get food is through asking  
 -in marriage  
 Where the only way you get food is through stealing  
 -in marriage)

The second and third songs highlight the voice of the married woman who tells her story of misery. Such songs reflect the disadvantaged status of women once they are married. Society accords women no "political, economic, religious, or social power; they are primarily the units through which commands for service are executed" (Kuper 1947: 130.) The bride is like an 'orphan' who has no one to fend for her, and who could soon be blamed for 'crimes' she has not committed, including stealing, witchcraft or eating forbidden food. Although such practices have almost disappeared in urban settings, any woman who does not adhere to the expectations of society is corrected through songs: "Songs of ridicule were, and occasionally still are, composed to humiliate such a woman" (Kuper 1947: 130).

As soon as a woman is married, the rules and regulations that govern married women, which her own people give her in the *kagogo* (sacred family hut) before she leaves her own people are revised. Her mother in law, her 'sisters in marriage' or co-wives all remind her of what not to do as a newly married woman<sup>65</sup>. Songs curtail all inclination to be assertive so when a woman shows signs of being assertive she becomes labelled as 'bad'. This next song expresses the daily conflict of women, as they 'die' from being wrongly accused:

*Maye ngafa mine*  
 (Oh! I am dying)

<sup>65</sup> In addition to not eating eggs, women may not drink milk or eat its products. The only time she can do this is when her family have given her *inkhomo yelubisi* (a milk cow). This rule is still in force in some of the rural parts of Swaziland, and some women break the rule and use milk by 'stealing'.

*Maye babe ngafa mine*  
 (Oh! My father I am dying!)  
*Yehha! Yehha!*  
 (Oh! Oh!)  
*Maye babe ngafa yimilomo*  
 (Oh! My father I am dying of mouths)  
*Yehha! Yehha!*  
 (Oh! Oh!)  
*Imilomo yonkhe iza kimi*  
 (All mouths are coming to me/ accusing me)

### 3.2.7.1 Work songs

Singing is also used as an energising force, when people are working in the fields. They sing and sometimes dance in a manner that will rhythmically be in agreement with the way the hoes hit the soil. This functions well especially when weeding *lilima* (work parties) or “communal enterprises” (Kuper 1947:133) have been invited to help. The farm workers, mostly women, line themselves up and the leader starts singing. The hoes are lifted up at the same time and they hit the soil at the same time again. As this is done, the feet move in a dancing manner that makes it easier for more and more of the field to be weeded. This way, they cover more than they do when working individually and focusing on the work. Their attention is on enjoying the singing and the dancing. As the leader sings, the rest respond.

**Song leader:** *Yemnikati wensimu!*  
 (Hey you owner of this field!)  
**Others:** *Membeseni atowulala butfongo!*  
 (Cover her up so that she may have a good sleep!)

The people repeat these words again and again as they work. In this song, the communal party workers suggest that the owner of the field with weeds has no rest, and cannot sleep properly even at night, worrying about the work that needs to be done, and the damage the delay of weeding causes to the crop. The assumption is that after the weeding process is complete, the owner of the field will sleep properly. The community members, who help the owner of the field, are figuratively like someone who assists another person shivering with cold at night because there is no blanket. Offering help in weeding is

therefore like covering a friend. The owner of the field rests, like a person who has been offered a blanket can sleep well even on a cold night.

The same principle of singing, assisting people achieve more without consciously concentrating on the hard part of what they are doing operates when the *umhlanga* girls and young women take their long walk from the central royal residence at Lobamba<sup>66</sup> to Sidvokodvo<sup>67</sup> and Bhamsakhe<sup>68</sup> where they cut *umhlanga*. Along the way the girls sing and dance in order to arrive at their destination without feeling the distance.

### 3.2.7.2 Dancing

Dancing goes hand in hand with singing, chants or music. In Africa dance is part of everyday living, and accentuates almost every activity the people engage in:

Dance in Africa is not a separate art, but a part of the whole complex of living... Dancers become filled with supernatural power. The dance is strong magic. The dance is a spirit. It turns the body into liquid steel. It makes it vibrate like a guitar. The body can fly without wings. It can sing without voice. The dance is strong magic. The dance is life (Asante, Karim Welsh, *African Dance: An Artistic, Historical, and Philosophical Inquiry* 1996: 4-5).

What Asante describes here is sensational and its effects on the dancer, as well as the audience partially depend on the song that the dance aligns with. Examples of such effects can be found in the dance songs students sing as they dance during their arts and culture competitions. These competitions are an effort by the ministry of education to revive the dying cultural practices, which are gradually displaced by contemporary forms of entertainment. The school children compete in a variety of dances, including *ummiso*<sup>69</sup> and *ingadla*<sup>70</sup> for girls and *sibhaca*<sup>71</sup> (see appendix 13), *kukosha*<sup>72</sup> and *ingadla* for boys.

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<sup>66</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>67</sup> Sidvokodvo is the name of the place where the grown up girls or young *umhlanga* women fetch their *umhlanga* (reeds)

<sup>68</sup> Bhamsakhe is the name of the place where younger girls go to fetch their *umhlanga*.

<sup>69</sup> *Ummiso* is a special dance for girls and women in which they dance whilst walking as well as whilst standing still.

<sup>70</sup> *Ingadla* is a type of 'stomp' dancing, which is done differently by each section of society. Men and boys have their way of stomp dancing. Girls and women have different ways of dancing that comply with their status, such as lifting the legs high by girls and for married women not lifting the legs.

Each team of singers and dancers aims to win so the words of their songs reflect a strong sense of confidence and assertiveness, such as these:

**Leader:** *NaMsweli*<sup>73</sup> *samehlula!*

We defeated even Msweli!

**Others:** *Wobayeza, wobayeza!*

(They are coming, they are coming!)

**Leader:** *NaMndlovu*<sup>74</sup> *samehlula!*

(We defeated even Mndlovu!)

**Others:** *Wobayeza, wobayeza!*

(They are coming, they are coming!)

These words reflect that the team is confident of their dance skills, claiming they defeated even the two people who are acclaimed countrywide for their dance skill. Such a dance has very positive effects on the dancers, whether they win or not. Although *sibhaca* dance is for boys and men, women are there to help with the back-up singing. The lyrics that accompany women's dancing portray an element of weakness and dependency on men. The following song for girls' *ingadla* (stomp-dancing) reflects this sense of helplessness and mourning:

**Leader:** *Wakam 'useMlembe*<sup>75</sup>

(My lover is at Mlembe,)

**Others:** *Yehha use Mlembe*

(Oh yeah he is at Mlembe)

**Leader:** *Watsatfwa nguloMlembe...*

(He was taken by this Mlembe...)

**Others:** *Yehha use Mlembe*

(Oh yeah he is at Mlembe!)

In this song the young woman is complaining that her lover has left her alone and went to live in Mlembe. There were many stories that after settling in the mine compounds such

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<sup>71</sup> *Sibhaca* is a type of stomp dancing that is uniformly performed by a team of dancers with a leading dancer in command.

<sup>72</sup> *Kukosha* is a special dance for boys and men that displays their body flexibility and agility.

<sup>73</sup> Msweli is a highly skilled *sibhaca* dancer, who led a team that took first position in traditional dance competitions for many years. He then got a position as a culture teacher, specializing in traditional dances. He was posted to the Matsapha Swazi National High School, where schools that needed his training could access him.

<sup>74</sup> Mndlovu is a male teacher who became famous for his *sibhaca* dance skills after Msweli in the 1980s.

<sup>75</sup> Mlembe is the Siswati name for the Havelock Asbestos Mine settlement to which many young men in the country went in the 1960s and 70s when the mine was still in operation.



as Mlembe, young men tended to forget about their lovers and wives they had left back home, and found themselves new ones they lived with as *bomasihlalisane* (cohabiting). The singer is not saying anything positive about herself, but complaining, and definitely expecting the rest of her audience to join her. The sense of loss because of men who go to work and leave their lovers behind is found widely among women. This next dance song highlights more of the experiences of women who were left behind with children by their husbands:

**Leader:** *Meme mntfwanami eBhunya<sup>76</sup> bahlile!*

(Come on my back my baby, at Bhunya they have got their wages!)

**Others:** *Siyolalaphi lamhlanje?*

(Where will we sleep tonight?)

**Leader:** *Meme mntfwanami eBhunya bahlile!*

(Come on my back my baby, at Bhunya they have got their wages!)

**Others:** *Siyolalaphi lamhlanje?*

(Where will we sleep tonight?)

The tone of this song is different from the above one by a neglected lover. The woman, who leads and dances to this song, performs the part of a woman who has been left by her husband with children at home. However, this woman is not just sitting at home complaining and doing nothing. She is well informed, and knows when her husband will get his wages. She is a militant woman who is ready to go to where her husband is, whether he needs her or not. The rhetoric question, “*siyolalaphi namhlanje* (where will we sleep tonight?)” shows that she is aware she may find her husband with another woman, and therefore have no place to sleep. Although she is uncertain of her circumstances when she gets there, she is prepared to face it, whatever it is. When a man’s wife found him with a live-in lover there were usually fights. The dancer here is dependent on her husband for money, but she is assertive enough to go fight for it if need be.

As stated earlier, that in this society, a woman’s worth in her marriage is judged by her having children. The dancer here decides not to leave her baby behind when going to

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<sup>76</sup> Bhunya is a settlement in the Manzini region of the country which came into existence because of the Usuthu Pulp Mill that is there. Many people abandoned the countryside completely as they went to work in both the Usuthu Forest and the Usuthu Pulp Mill.

fight for money at the Bhunya *nkopolo* (settlement). The baby, serves as a 'passport' with which she will have the authority to claim access to where her husband is, as well as claim money. In this case, the money is supposed to be for the baby, or other children back home, whom the baby represents.

The perpetrators of polygamy in the country claim that it is good and worked well especially in the past, but some of the songs that stem from the past reflect that even then there were unending squabbles among the co-wives. The songs that women sang as they danced reveal a lot about the practice. There was always fighting about sex in a polygamous marriage. The next song reflects different cases of sex as a subject to fight over:

**Leader:** *Mine bengidzakiwe!*

(I was drunk!)

**Other women:** *Ungabokhiyela lomunye edladleni!*

(You should not lock another woman in the kitchen!)

**Leader:** *Mine bengidzakiwe!*

(I was drunk!)

**Other Women:** *Nawe mfat' uyay'tsandza lendvodza!*

(Hey you woman you love this man!)

**Leader:** *Mine bengidzakiwe bo!*

(Oh I was drunk!)

In this dance song the 'jealous' woman is being ridiculed for locking up her co-wife in the kitchen so that she cannot take her turn, and then claims that her being drunk was the cause of her deed. The song leader dances in the centre and plays the part of a jealous wife who locks up her co-wife, and the rest of the women are playing the part of all women who blame her for her deed which they consider inappropriate.

All the women are victims of this oppressive practice which turns the man into a 'prize bull', whose attention all the 'females fight to win. Why do women have to share a man and end up fighting and locking each other in kitchens? Polygamy subjects women to the misery of waiting for their 'turns' to be with their husbands. They spend lonely nights although they are married women. The so-called 'turns' to be with the man do not even

take into consideration that women have a monthly menstrual cycle which may result in some women not even enjoying the sexual intercourse when their 'turn' comes.

In a marriage, both husband and wife have to work towards meeting each other's needs, but in a polygamous marriage only the women have to make an effort to meet the needs of the man for whose attention and favour they compete. Even then, the most successful wife, the favourite invariably ends up being blamed for witchcraft. The others accuse her of giving him *lijazi lensimbi* (a coat of iron), which means that she bewitched him to do her will all the time. Women sing and dance to this song to complain about unfair treatment in polygamy:

**Leader:** *Indvodza yelijazi iyagula nayiyowulala kami*  
(The coat (bewitched) man is ill whenever he has to sleep with me)  
**Others:** *Iyagula!*  
(He is ill!)  
**Leader:** *Indvodza yelijazi iyagula nayiyowulala kami*  
(The coat (bewitched) man is ill whenever he has to sleep with me)  
**Others:** *Iyagula!*  
(He is ill!)

Similar to the above dance song, this singer blames another woman for the inappropriate behaviour of a man. Blame is a stumbling block to the development of women. The more the women sing and dance to such themes, the more they will believe the obscure and false messages inherent in the dance songs. Next, I examine music where anything capable of making sound is used!

### 3.2.8 Music

In Swaziland there are many traditional musical instruments but the most basic form of music is clapping by both men and women. As the case is with songs and dance, musical instruments are also gendered. For women, *emafahlawane*, dancing rattle anklets made from a special kind of tree are essential for all types of dancing. For men, *tigubhu* (hide drums) are essential to enhance the stomping of feet, and amplify the magnitude of stomping. There are various types of hand rattles that accompany clapping too. Some of these are made from dried gourds with seeds or pebbles. *Luvungu* (a vibrating tin and

string instrument) is also used for *sibhaca* (team stomp dancing). There are many other mouth musical instruments which have disappeared, and they include *sitolotolo* (metal mouth and finger instrument) and *umntjingo* (reed wind pipe instrument). However, some of these instruments are now disappearing due to the popularity of contemporary ones, which are easily attainable and also relevant to popular music.

The *licilongo* (trumpet) came during the colonial era. It is associated with power because of its relevance to war, so men rather than women play it. Drums are powerful instruments that can be heard even far away. Drums draw attention too, making the drummer noticeable, and that is a realm into which women are prohibited. *Bhelebane* (an accordion) used to be popular in the past when men walked long distances to court young women in far away places. When a man played this instrument he could walk at a very fast pace and cover a very long distance without feeling it because its melody and rhythm made the player focus on them as opposed to the long distance. *Bhelebane* (an accordion), therefore, is associated with men walking long distances to court young women.

*Makhweyane* (gourd and string instrument) (see appendix 12) is used by women, although some men play it too. One of the king's elder half sisters, Princess Tfofhi plays *makhweyane* and sings songs that carry positive messages for women as well as those that ridicule men who have *emashende* (lovers) such as this one:

*Ulihuzu! Ulihuzu! Ulihuzu, Ulihumusha!*  
*Yendvodza lentjintj'emashende uyehhe babe*  
*Ulihuzu! Ulihuzu! Ulihuzu, Ulihumusha!*  
*Yendvodza lentjintj'emashende uyehhe babe*  
(You are a scoundrel! You are a scoundrel! You are a rogue!  
Hey you man who changes private lovers! Oh mine!  
You are a scoundrel! You are a scoundrel! You are a rogue!  
Hey you man who changes private lovers! Oh mine!

The princess's song is directed at men who take advantage of polygamy without taking any full responsibility. She makes a distinction between polygamy and private lovers and condemns the practice of having 'private lovers' by a man. She does not call such a man an *inganwa* (a man with many girlfriends), which is a positive term (albeit constructed by

a patriarchal mindset!) but calls the man a scoundrel. Such women's performances illustrate a shift in the use of performance, from merely being a communication tool reinforcing control over women, to that of being a motivator of women to stand for themselves. These assertive performances by women still have a challenge ahead however because whenever women perform in rituals, both at homestead and national level, the messages of those performances are still the old ones which instil the oppression of women.

### 3.2.9 Contemporary Musical Practices

In the twenty-first century some women in Swaziland have entered into the male territory of playing 'attention-drawing' instruments such as the modern electric piano/organ. Others even play guitars although this instrument is associated with being 'wild' in Swaziland where its *SiSwati* nickname is *timbambo taSathane* (Satan's ribs). This negative label was found in religious spheres during the early days when missionaries did their groundwork in the country. However, as there has been a revolution in the way Christians worship, the use of musical instruments has become accepted in churches. Most of the women who play musical instruments are mainly found in churches.

One example of these women is one of the king's thirteen wives, Inkhosikati LaMbikiza, who has become a role model for women who refuse to confine themselves to the spaces society has set aside for them. The *Inkhosikati*, LaMbikiza plays an electric piano/organ and sings in public gatherings and plays a leading role in the choir she has established. Her songs are religious, and their theme messages are empowering. She is a motivational performer, and therefore has been severely criticised by various forms of media in Swaziland. *Inkhosikati* LaMbikiza's ability to defy society this way is regarded by many as a developmental move. Through her endeavour many women have followed suit, not only in performance, but academically too.

*Inkhosikati* LaMbikiza lives what she talks about. Her songs reflect what she believes. She states that every person was born to be the best they can be. Her popular song that made traditionalists criticise her is the one which says "what God says will surely come

to pass". She talks about Abraham from the Bible, who did not live according to the expectations of people but pursued what he felt God had promised him until he got it. This message is relevant to her own life, because when she started appearing in national gatherings playing the piano she sang with some of the king's *emakhosikati* (other wives). They said it was a bad thing for an *inkhosikati* (king's wife) to make public performances. The other *emakhosikati* stopped, but *Inkhosikati* LaMbikiza went a step further to join a Gospel Group that proved to be the best in the country at the time. As if that was not enough, she pursued a law degree which she achieved within a short time, and soon registered with the Law Association. Each time they criticized her, the *Inkhosikati* pursued more. She now holds a doctoral degree in law and has not given in to the criticism of traditionalists. Her first daughter who is in her early twenties has come out publicly in the media, criticizing the gender inequalities in the country, at the top of which she places polygamy.

This society is comfortable with women who sing songs which reflect feelings of helplessness because such women are a threat to no one. They are easy to control because they seem to have accepted their situation. Their audiences often pity them, without bringing solutions or mere suggestions that could change their situation. However, nowadays some Swazi women have broken away from society's expectations of women. One woman well known as Bhejane, an acclaimed player of *makhweyane* (a gourd and bow instrument) started singing songs whose messages are her own praises rather than talking about being disadvantaged. She was even sponsored to perform in France although her only language is *SiSwati*.

Nomathemba is one of the women who have defied society by invading the public performance space occupied by men such as Duma namankonyane, Dumsane Mbuli and other men. In her songs Nomathemba addresses sexual issues in a manner that is unusual for women in Swaziland to do. In one of her songs she addresses the problem of married men who are not sexually active. Normally, if this happens a man's wife may take the blame believing that she is the one who does not appeal to the man anymore and then

develop feelings of rejection and inadequacy, but in the following song Nomathemba subverts the situation:

*Maye maye maye.....Oh My my!*  
*Mine ngagana sigwadzi.....I fell in love with an incapable man*  
*Singilalisa ngedvwana.....He lets me sleep alone*  
*Ngitakwenta njani .....What am I going to do?*

When singing her song, Nomathemba assumes the position of a neglected woman who sleeps alone. By 'sleeping alone' here, the song means sleeping together but having no sexual intercourse. Instead of blaming herself, as some songs by men would reflect, she states that her problem was with making a poor choice, and that the real problem is with the man, who is sexually incapable. In a society where people are used to hearing songs about women who compete for love from a man, and where the 'excellent' woman gets the man, she reveals something new yet old: a sexually incapable man. Nomathemba's achievement is like that of women in South Africa who have struggled to perform in public. Most of the time women in Swaziland perform publicly in churches, at weddings and funerals.

Women have however, now claimed singing in other contexts as a forum through which they can bestow upon themselves power to address issues that concern them. Through their songs they can make declarations, which they could never utter in normal life. These could be about the malice of men or complaints such as the uneven distribution of wealth and sex by a polygamous man. Significantly, in these days with the outbreak of HIV/AIDS women sing songs that are a plea to men who indulge in multiple sexual relations to wear condoms. The limitation is that when women engage in such performances very few men attend.

As part of the World AIDS Day Celebration in the country, on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2006, there was an event, called the *Etulu Divas Summer Celebration*, the first of its kind in the kingdom. Its aim was to bring women together to share experiences and celebrate the achievements of Swazi women over the years. "It sought to promote the continued

acknowledgement and empowerment of the Swazi woman in nation building<sup>77</sup>. Activities for the evening included poetry and stories celebrating women and womanhood. They were rendered by local artists<sup>78</sup>.

### 3.3 Rituals at homestead level

The rituals in Swaziland are almost the main existing force that still binds women to the oppressive hold of patriarchy. Women who are struggling for emancipation continuously alter the rituals in every possible way. I have selected the few rituals which prove to affect women.

#### 3.3.1 *Kumekeza/ kuteka/ kugcobisa libovu* (Taking a wife the customary way)

One of the practices that Swazi people have carried over from the pre-colonial period is the way of taking a wife through the *kuteka* (taking a wife) ritual. *Kuteka* (taking a wife) has been described by its critics as forced marriage. Although I also regard the practice as an imposed forceful way of marrying a woman, I am aware that not all women married through *kuteka* are forced. This may sound confusing, but it is not when you consider what the original idea of this kind of marriage was. During the pre-colonial era, *kuteka* was not even a kind of marriage. It was the only way Swazi people took wives because then, there was no other way of marrying a woman. I do not imply that at that time all men only got married to women who were willing. The nature of the practice made it possible for well meaning as well as selfish oppressive men with ulterior motives to marry their wives without the motives being easily detected.

Before I examine the *kuteka* ritual, I describe the steps that led to the actual ritual performance in the olden days. I also juxtapose the process of the pre-colonial era with the contemporary one to elucidate the enforced nature of the current together. It was mainly the woman who went to the men's homestead. This was called *kujuma*. The *kujuma* concept is more than the visit, and includes the fun the lovers enjoyed throughout the night. They were not expected to have any penetrative sexual intercourse for the

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<sup>77</sup> The Times of Swaziland, 5<sup>th</sup> December, 2006.

<sup>78</sup> Examples of such artists are Siphesihle Shongwe, a young poet, youth activist Mathambo Ngobese, as well as the upcoming singer "Sibo".



women of olden days were well trained to sleep with a man and still not be penetrated sexually. Nevertheless, it evidently did not always 'work' as many women got pregnant. The *emachikiza* (young women's mentors) taught the young women the techniques they had to master in order to enjoy themselves without being violated by their lovers.

When a man wanted to marry his lover, he used one of the *kujuma* visits. Before making any serious marriage plans he would (woo her for the second time) as a formal marriage proposal. As with all other proposals, the woman could consent either positively or negatively. Some women declined the offer for a number of reasons such as not being ready for marriage yet. Once the woman had agreed to be married the man would warn her that he would *teka* (marry) her any day then. Other men did not really specify the actual day, but the woman would be aware that she was going to be '*teka-ed*'. The nature of the ritual worked well if the woman was not aware that a particular night was designated as the night of the ritual. The negative aspect is that even when a woman declined the marriage offer some men nevertheless forced it in order to avoid losing her to other men.

After a woman has agreed to be *teka-ed*, the man tells his family and they prepare by getting a goat to slaughter, and also *sidziya*<sup>79</sup> (a pinafore or apron) to dress up the newly married woman with, as a sign of her married status. The 'unsuspecting' woman goes to her lover's *lilawu* (an unmarried man's hut [or room]) as usual. They even go to sleep as if every thing is normal. On the next day very early in the morning around 2.00 am or 3.00 am, a group of girls and young women goes to knock at the door and wake up the lovers. They shout the 'brides' name out loud. For example if her name is Khulile they call out as follows:

Group: *Khulile! Khulile! Phuma! Phuma Khulile, sesikutekile sikwente umfati!*  
(Khulile! Khulile! Come out! Come out Khulile, we have made you a wife!

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<sup>79</sup> *Sidziya* is a pinafore/ apron or overdress that women wear to signify their married status. It is regarded as being disrespectful for a married woman not to wear one.

As they shout, they open the door to the *lilawu* (man's hut) and drag the woman out half dressed. They give her *sidvwaba* (the Swazi leather skirt for married women) with her breasts uncovered<sup>80</sup>. When they drag the woman out, whether she wants to be 'teka-ed' or not, she has to cry. Crying is vital in the ritual of marrying a wife. If the woman does not cry, some of the group members assist her by mimicking crying and singing sorrowful songs that provoke tears. Sometimes they hurl insults at her so that she may cry. The act of crying by a woman being 'teka-ed' is called *kumekeza*. As the woman carries on with *kumekeza* (crying), the rest of the group sings the special song for *kumekeza* and *kuteka*:

*Ngiphum'ekufen' ngingen'ekufen...*  
 (I'm coming out of death and entering into another death)  
*Mine ngibashiye balele bontsanga yetfu*  
 (I've left my age mates asleep)  
*Hheya! Hheya! Hheya! Hheya!*  
 (Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!)  
*Ngiwadla akangeni yelababe*  
 (Even the food I eat does not go down)  
*Hheya! Hheya! Hheya! Hheya!*  
 (Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!)  
*Zindunduzeleni bontsanga yetfu*  
 (Comfort yourselves my age mates)  
*Hheya! Hheya! Hheya! Hheya!*  
 (Oh! Oh! Oh! Oh!)

*Make Matsebula-LaMdlovu*<sup>81</sup> explains, "her in-laws give the new bride *sikhali* (a spear) to lean upon as she walks crying about the kraal". As she walks, the spear stabs the ground as a sign of her asking for refuge from the family ancestors. This is the only time she is allowed to be inside the family kraal. The bride's song was a cry of helplessness, because as she was getting married, she was moving from the position of being in the controlling hand of her father, to another controlling hand of her husband and her in-laws. Each young bride was expected to work for her mother-in-law, who served as a mentor for her until she was promoted to the position of *umfati* (woman). After her promotion to

<sup>80</sup> To the Swazi people showing of breasts was not regarded as nakedness in olden times because the dress code of women of all ages from childhood exposed a woman's breasts. Young women of marrying age had their breast showing such that sometimes young men made comments about the beauty of the breasts when wooing a young woman. However, with the change in the women dress, and the diversity of cultures in the country, showing breasts is now regarded as nakedness.

<sup>81</sup> Personal interview: Ngwane Park –Manzini, 2003.

the status of *bufati* (womanhood), she could then start doing things for her own household.

To conclude the *kuteka* ritual, a senior woman from the man's family sits down on a *sihlantsi* (sitting mat) and the group brings the bride, still crying, to sit down. The senior woman smears her with red ochre on the forehead, to seal her status as a married woman.

### 3.3.2. *Kugidza umtsimba* (Wedding celebration)

In weddings, the bridal party sings songs to entertain the people that attend the occasion but as the bride enters her new life, the songs contradict the occasion and the bride's adornment:

*Ngitowukhonta laph'ekhaya*  
(I have come to ask for a place in this home)  
*Ngitowukhonta laph'ekhaya*  
(I have come to ask for a place in this home)  
*Ngitowucel'inkhonto maketala*  
(I have come to ask for a place mother-in-law)  
*Ngitowuphinga, ngotowutsakatsa*  
(I have come to commit adultery and bewitch others)  
*Ngitowukhonta nje ngitowucabanisa*  
I have come to ask for a place yes I have come to cause people to quarrel)  
*Ngitowukhonta nje ngitowebea emacandza*  
I have come to ask for a place; yes I have come to cause people to quarrel)

*Waze wangilaya*  
(Oh! You have fixed me up)  
*Waye waze wangilaya Khubonye*  
(Oh! You have fixed me Khubonye [groom's surname])  
*Yehha! Yehha!*  
(Oh! Oh!)  
*Waye wangifaka esibayeni*  
Oh! You have put me in a kraal)  
*Waye wangenta umunfu*  
(Oh! You have made me a person)  
*Yehha woza Nkentewane*  
(Oh come Nkentewane)  
*Sekuntente yebomnaketfu*  
(It is sad my brothers and sisters)

The bridal party sings these songs of helplessness rather than a celebration. A Swazi traditional wedding is a conflicting experience between celebration and awareness about an unhappy experience soon to follow after the occasion, so there are tears of sorrow rather than joy. The 'happy' part of the celebration, apart from the entertaining singing and dancing, is the bride's 'gratitude' towards her husband and in-laws for 'making her a person'. In reality, this is also not true happiness, because the happiness is mainly because she has achieved what society expects of her; to be married. Whether she is really happy to go through the experience or not is not very clear. The same mixed feelings of a woman happen when her in-laws come to pay her *lobolo*.

### 3.3.3 Performance of *Lobolo* payment

One of the stages of the long process of marrying a woman the customary way is to pay *lobolo*. When a man is ready to pay *lobolo* to her lover's family, his family sends a messenger to the woman's family to negotiate when the man's family could send *bayeni/baloboli* (representatives to pay bride price). After agreeing on a date comprising of three days, nowadays usually Friday to Sunday, preparations begin. The woman's father informs his *lusendvo* (extended family) about the event. The extended family members from far away places arrive on the Friday or Thursday. The woman's father's sisters who are married come home because they play a major role in making family decisions, as *bobabe labasikati* (female fathers). The voice of a married aunt carries more weight than that of an unmarried one, but of marriageable age. The worst position of a woman is to be labelled *libuyal mabuya ekwendzeni* (the one who returned from marriage).

On the Friday night, when *bayeni* (in-laws) are to arrive, the special<sup>82</sup> woman, who has gathered everyone on the occasion is called *dzadzewetfu* (our sister). Together with other women in the homestead, she sits at *kagogo* (the sacred family hut) awaiting the arrival of her in-laws. They announce their arrival by the entrance point of the kraal. Their leader shouts, "*Siyalobola gogo!*" (Grandmother, we are paying the bride price!) The shouting man goes on to state their surname and the area they come from. He also mentions the

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<sup>82</sup> The woman for whom bride price is paid is treated as a very special and honoured person because through her, her father is honoured to the extent of receiving cattle, the greatest asset after land to Swazi people.

name of the woman they are interested in, and the number of cattle they have brought with them:

**The leader:** *Sita netinkhomo letilishumi natintsatfu. Tiholwa yinkhomati lebovu lenelibala lelimhlophe ebunti. Kube nenkunzi lemnyama lenetimphondvo letibheke emuva. Sekunenkhomati lemacabhacabha lamhlophe nalokumnyama, ihamba nelitfole layo. Sita nanenkhaba lemnyama...*

(We have come with thirteen heads of cattle. They are led by a red cow with a white patch on the forehead. Then, there is a black bull with backward horns. Also, there is a black and white spotted cow with a calf. There is also a black ox with no horns...)

After the in-laws have finished stating their mission and describing the cattle they have brought, the family then sends a young boy to take them to the hut or room prepared for them. They are given a drink of *mahewu* (fermented soft porridge drink). On the following day no one attends to the in-laws until late afternoon. In the morning they go to look for a river in which to bathe. Before the negotiations between the two families begin, the family elders call the special woman to tell if she knows *lababantfu* (these people). She proudly tells them she knows one of them. That is a sign of acceptance and the negotiations go on.

During the talks, the woman's father shows the in-laws the beast they are slaughtering for them, called *inkhomo yebayeni* (the in-laws' cow). Another special cow is slaughtered which they call *inkhomo yad zadze* (our sister's cow), called *lugege*<sup>83</sup>. During the process of killing this special cow the girls sing and dance songs in her honour such as, "*ayivuke inkhomo yad zadze* (let our sister's cow come alive again)". As a sign to further seal the relationship between the two families the gall bladders from the two beasts are brought together and given to the two lovers as meat bracelets. The significance of such practices becomes a major factor when the couple experiences irreconcilable problems and makes it difficult for them to terminate their marriage. This is mainly because the seal involves their families.

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<sup>83</sup> Lugege is the cow that is slaughtered just to be eaten. It is the pride of the woman whose bride price is paid. She brags about it whenever she sees a need for it.

### 3.4 Rituals at national level

There are many rituals that Swazi people perform at national level. Such rituals are those that involve *emakhosi*<sup>84</sup> (the king and Queen Mother) “the king entitled *Ngwenyama*, the lion and his mother the *Indlovukati*, lady elephant, together symbolize fertility, authority, and order in the universe” (Kuper, “*Incwala* in Swaziland: Of growth and kingship” undated: 58). The leading ritual focusing on the king, is the *Incwala* ceremony, which has multiple purposes including marking off the old year from the new one; the making of rain by the Mkhathjwa clan of *Elwandle* (of the ocean); conducting a national prayer to *labaphansi* (ancestors), which is also regarded as the king’s own *kumekeza* (cry of marriage) to the ancestors, and other sacred activities. The other important ritual that focuses on the queen mother is the *umhlanga* dance ceremony. Here, I only examine the two ceremonies, *Incwala* and *umhlanga* ceremonies.

#### 3.4.1 *Incwala* (first fruit) Ceremony

*Incwala* ritual is an old one which, according to Lutfo Dlamini<sup>85</sup> has “been there for over four to five hundred years”<sup>86</sup>. This ritual “imported from the Ndwandwe assisted Mswati II in reinforcing focus of the nation on the king. It was during Mswati II’s reign that the *Incwala* (first fruits) ceremony was first introduced into Swaziland (Booth 1983: 10). As a result of this affiliation with Ndwandwe people, they play a major role during the ceremony.

*Incwala* ceremony serves as the national prayer and time of the year when the Swazi king takes his first bite of the first fruit of each new-year, and it “spans about two lunar months” (Motsa 2001:36.) Much of the *Incwala* ceremony involves sacred and secret rites and entails direct participation by the King. Swazi astrologers, who monitor the moon phases to determine the ideal time in December or January, select the specific date for this event. The ritual begins with *bemanti*<sup>87</sup> (the water people) who are believed to be

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<sup>84</sup> Emakhosi refers to the King and Queen Mother.

<sup>85</sup> Lutfo is one of the Dlamini people who have had the privilege of learning the Swazi History from both parents and grandparents. He is the current Minister for Enterprise and Employment

<sup>86</sup> In an interview with Benita van Eyssen August 29 2005.

<sup>87</sup> *Bemanti* (of water) is a group of representative men from the Mkhathjwa clan. They are reputed to have rain making power, thus the name, water people.

rain-makers. The water people are exclusively men from the Mkhathjwa clan. They journey to Mozambique to collect water from the Indian Ocean.

On their return from the sea their leader recites *tibongo* of the king, whilst the rest of the *emabutfo* (regiments) remain standing. After the praises the whole group of participants in this ritual approach the *inhlambelo* (shrine), a special space that is a symbol of power, into which only the powerful may enter. There they sing *Inqaba kaNqomfula*<sup>88</sup>, the “traditional national anthem” (ibid). After this sacred song the general public also enters the royal cattle byre and joins in the singing of another *Incwala* hymn. Following this, the king then bites the special fruit brought by the party of *bemanti* (water people.) The next phase is sending out of ‘virgin boys’ to cut *lusekwane*, for the yearly renovation of the royal cattle byre.

On the main and final day of the ceremony a pitch-black bull is ushered into the *inhlambelo*. The king hits the bull with his special stick which instantly drives the animal wild. As it runs wild in the cattle byre, the ‘virgin boys’ attack it with their bare hands until it falls down. This is a symbol of power and victory over *ematfunti* (shades of darkness), which is in line with the ceremony that commemorates the ancient Swazi victory. In the late afternoon there is more dancing by the *emabutfo*. Only the king, escorted by royalty then moves into the *inhlambelo*. The performance that takes place there is sacred and may not be disclosed to ‘ordinary’ people. The final public performance is when the king takes a second bite of the first fruit.

Swazi people say *incwala* has no audience, which is encapsulated in the slogan they use in reference to the ceremony, “*kayibukelwa!*” (It is not watched). Although no one is allowed to be a spectator, the rule has been broken by the involvement of journalists in national activities, in order to have the events recorded. This highly political performance carries the history of the Swazi people and is “commemorative of the victorious storming of Sekhukhune’s fortress by emaSwati in 1881” (Motsa 2001: 36). Women’s

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<sup>88</sup> *Inqaba kaNqomfula* is the sacred song that the people sing only during the *incwala* ceremony. It is a commemoration of the Swazi people’s victory during the Mshadza battle.

participation is minimal in this ritual. The importance of time and space in this ritual is heightened, as the king enters the *inhlambelo* with his escorts and a very few members of the royal family.

Only one woman from the Matsebula clan is allowed into the *inhlambelo*. She enters by virtue of her status as the king's *sesulamsiti* (the one into whom dirt is deposited). Although this woman is called one of the king's *emakhosikati* (wives), her role is not that of a wife. As this woman performs her role, she "walks slowly and must not weep: She is a man, an *inkosi* (ruler); and she should be proud in fulfilling her duty, however difficult" (Kuper 1947: 80). Kuper's attestation implies that the inexplicable role that this woman plays is not pleasurable. It is one that would make any other woman cry, but she must not cry. This scenario is representative of the plight of Swazi women who are constantly faced with the predicament of sad and painful experiences, for which they are supposed to be grateful.

The sacred ritual is symbolic of every woman who by the virtue of becoming a married wife becomes some kind of feeling-less living being, which can take any amount of pain and harsh life without complaining. To a certain extent what the sacred *inkhosikati* experiences is representative of what every Swazi wife goes through, accepting to carry out her duties without complaint because her role as a wife is a 'privilege' and 'honour'.

The sacred nature of *incwala* is marked by the combination of praises of the present and past Swazi kings, chants made by the *emabutfo* as well as songs and dance. The songs and dance performed in this ritual are of a dignified nature and are performed in a solemn warlike manner. As the *timbongi* sound their various *tibongo* of the past and present monarchs the atmosphere is filled with radiance along with feelings of sorrow. The *incwala* ritual serves as a force that spiritually and emotionally transforms the participants, when they enact the past war victory. This ceremony recalls the time when the people as a nation, were being led by the king who invoked the *emadloti* or *labaphasi* (ancestors). In this ceremony the participants experience their being Swazi in a deeper way as they realise their spiritual connection with the ancestors. The power carried by



this performance fills the air itself and is carried through, by means of the “symbolic representation of action, imbued with music, dance, mime, spectacle and mood variation” (Motsa 2001: 39.)

### 3.4.2 *Umhlanga* (reed) Dance Ceremony

*Umhlanga* dance is an eight day ceremony, in which girls cut reeds and present them to the queen mother and then dance. The reeds are especially for making *emaguma* (enclosures) or windbreaks constructed in front of the huts in the Queen Mother’s traditional palace. In the country, homesteads with huts and *emaguma* are becoming extinct, but the traditional palaces and some *imiphakatsi* (chiefdom quarters) still have them. In late August to early September the season of no work in the fields, the childless and unmarried girls or young women take part in the ceremony. These main participants of the ceremony are called *tintfombi temhlanga*<sup>89</sup>. Apart from providing tribute labour for the Queen Mother the ceremony aims to preserve the girls’ chastity and to develop solidarity by working together. This preservation of the girl’s chastity is the first contradiction that I will address below.

*Emakhosi*, the King and Queen Mother), through *tikhulu* (chiefs) and the media, summon the girls to the royal residence to assemble before going to cut the reeds in the areas where they are abundant. The qualifying attribute for the participants of the ceremony is to be not yet sexually active, but that is a notional qualification. The royal family appoints one commoner girl to be the *indvuna* (captain) of the girls who qualifies by being an expert dancer and knowledgeable on royal protocol. Her duty is to work hand in hand with whichever princess is honoured to be the *inkhosatana* (main princess) of the period.

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<sup>89</sup> *Tintfombi temhlanga* is an inclusive term for all unmarried young girls from the age of five to about twenty two years. They are called virgins, but they are mainly marked by the fact that they have not fallen pregnant yet. These girls or young women are still referred to as ‘maidens.’

From about two hundred chiefdoms, *umhlanga* girls come to the Queen Mother's royal residence in groups<sup>90</sup>. On the first and arrival day, the *tinfombi temhlanga* are assembled and registered according to their chiefdoms for security. Each chief appoints four men called *tindvuna* (captains) to supervise the girls (see appendix 10). I find this to be the first anomaly: How safe are the girls in the care of men who may be attracted to them and whose bodies are more exposed at this time than usual. Nevertheless, under the 'care' of the *tindvuna* upon arrival the girls sleep in the huts of relatives in the royal villages or in the classrooms of the four nearby schools.

On the second day, the girls are separated into two groups, the older (about 14 to 22 years) and the younger (about 8 to 13). In the afternoon, they march, in their local groups, to the reed-beds with their supervisors. The older girls go to one of three places; Sidvokodvo, Mphisi Farm or Ntondozi according to the *umhlanga* yields that particular year, while the younger girls usually go to Bhamsakhe. If the older girls are sent to a far place such as Mphisi Farm, government provides trucks for their transport<sup>91</sup>. When the girls are dismissed to go to their destinations to cut the reeds, they shout for joy and start singing their songs, dancing in a more running manner than walking. Popular songs on the departure day include '*eluhholweni ngiyawulal'eluhholweni* (In the *dongas*<sup>92</sup>, I will sleep in the *dongas*)'. This song is the girls' cry that they will sleep in the *dongas* where they are exposed to danger. It goes on to say "I will tell my father that I will sleep in the *dongas*" (my translation). This song is less a complaint and more about the girls being proud to sleep away from home, 'in the *dongas*' to render a royal service than a complaint.

The girls reach the vicinity of the reeds in darkness, and sleep in government-provided tents or marquees. In the past, the local people used to accommodate the girls in their homesteads. On the third day they wake up and go to cut their reeds, usually about ten to

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<sup>90</sup> The royal residence used to be Lobamba, during Sobhuza's time, but now during Mswati's time it is Ludzidzini.

<sup>91</sup> Using transport to go and cut *umhlanga* is a new practice. Walking a long distance for the Queen Mother used to be the girls' pride.

<sup>92</sup> 'Dongas' refer to deserted places where there has been soil erosion leaving the land in deep ditches.

twenty each, using long knives. Each girl ties her reeds into one bundle. Nowadays they use strips of plastic bags for the tying, but those mindful of custom will still cut grass and plait it into rope. As they hew the reeds they sing a wide variety of songs.

On the fourth day, in the afternoon the girls set off to return to the Queen Mother's royal residence, carrying their bundles of reeds. Along the way they handle their bundles carefully in order not to ruin *sishakato* (the flower part of the reeds). In the past, if the (flower part) of the reeds was broken, the interpretation was that the owner had started sleeping with boys. Every girl handled her bundle with great care to avoid being suspected and accused of sleeping with boys. Whether the girls had been to a far away place or not, they arrived at the Queen Mother's residence at night as a way to show that they had travelled a very long way. The fifth day is a day of rest on which the girls make final preparations to their hair and dancing costumes. The sixth day is the day of 'dropping' the reeds and it is also the first day of dancing. Dancing starts in the afternoon, as the girls drop their reeds outside the Queen Mothers quarters. They move to the arena and keeping in their groups, dance, each group singing different songs at the same time:

<b>Leader:</b> <i>Ge, ge, ge, emcamelweni!</i>	(Yo ho ho! On the pillow!)
<b>Chorus:</b> <i>Ngiyo lengwadla</i>	(Yes, she is immoral)
<i>Ayilal'emcamelweni</i>	(She never sleeps on a pillow!)
<i>Ngiyo lengwadla</i>	(Yes, she is immoral)
<i>Ayilal'emcamelweni</i>	(She never sleeps on a pillow!)
<b>Leader:</b> <i>Yasheshe yagana</i>	(She started too young)
<b>Chorus:</b> <i>Ngiyo lengwadla</i>	(Yes, she is immoral)
<i>Ayilal'emcamelweni</i>	(She never sleeps on a pillow!)
<i>Ngiyo lengwadla</i>	(Yes, she is immoral)
<i>Ayilal'emcamelweni</i>	(She never sleeps on a pillow!)
<b>Leader:</b> <i>Ingwadl'ingwabela!</i>	(Immoral from man to man!)
<b>Chorus:</b> <i>Ngiyo lengwadla</i>	(Yes, she is immoral)
<i>Ayilal'emcamelweni</i>	(She never sleeps on a pillow!)
<i>Ngiyo lengwadla</i>	(Yes, she is immoral)
<i>Ayilal'emcamelweni</i>	(She never sleeps on a pillow!)

This song ridicules women who cannot say no to any man who asks them for sex. As the girls drop their reeds and sing before the Queen Mother such a song is appropriate and

also serves as a way to show the Queen Mother that her *libutfo letintfombi* (regiment of girls) scorn women who have many lovers.

Among the songs that *tintfombi temhlanga* sing are those that contradict one of the aims of the ceremony, which is to promote chastity among the girls. These songs celebrate the practice of a man having sexual fun and seducing his wife's sister because she is his *umlamu* by the virtue of being his wife's sister.

**Leader:** *Ungiphats'emabhunswini!*

(You touch me in those nice areas!)

**Others:** *Yemlamu wami ung'phatsa kanjani?*

(Hey brother-in-law, how do you touch me?)

**Leader:** *Yelele babe*

(Yo yo yo, my father!)

**Others:** *Yemlamu wami ung'phatsa kanjani?*

(Hey brother-in-law, how do you touch me?)

**Leader:** *Ungiphatsa kwaze kwasa*

(You touch me until dawn!)

**Others:** *Yemlamu wami ung'phatsa kanjani?*

(Hey brother-in-law, how do you touch me?)

One would expect a society that encourages chastity among girls not to accommodate the practice of men seducing their wives' sisters, but this society encourages it. Chastity and widespread seduction are contradictory practices, and the various teams of *tintfombi temhlanga* can sing the contradictory songs even side by side as they parade before the Queen Mother. What emerges from this confusing situation of contradictory messages is that this society condemns girls' indulgence in love affairs if they make the choices, but if a man, a patriarchal figure, is the initiator of the relationship even without the girl's agreement, there is no harm. One of the girls' songs confirms this, by condemning a girl who changes lovers:

*Wena ntfontatana uyintjintji!*

*Sitakwentanjani?*

*Sasokola maja!*

(Hey you girl you are a changer!

What are we going to do?

We will struggle with you!

Some of the songs the girls sing have nothing to do with chastity and love matters, but are about the greatness of the king. Some of these songs even tap into the history of the country such as the loss of the Swazi nation land to South Africa, King Mswati II's expansion of the land of his people in the present Hhohho region:

*Lelive lenkhosi*  
*Ngelakho Nkhosi*  
*Ngelakho Nkhosi*  
*Ngelakho Mlangeni*  
*LakaNgwane balisik'emalegeni*  
*Balisik'emapulazi*  
*Balisikemalayini*  
*Kani ngelakho Mlangeni*  
(This land is yours Oh!  
It is yours king  
It is yours king  
It is yours, you of the Sun  
This land of Ngwane, they are cutting it into sections  
They are cutting it into farms  
They are cutting it into lines  
But it is yours, you of the Sun!)

*Mswati uyinkhosi kaHhohho*  
*Uyehhebabe*  
(Mswati you are a king in Hhohho  
Oh yeah! My father!)

On the seventh day, even the king comes to the ceremony. This day is dedicated to dancing only, after the girls had already presented their reeds to the Queen Mother. On this day *sigodlo* (the entire royal house) attends. As the girls dance, parading in circles in the dancing arena, the *Ngwenyama* (Lion King) and his wives pay tribute to the girls by dancing and ululating. It is Swazi custom to acknowledge a good dancer, by doing the *kuphoseka* (galloping in a gracious manner) and slapping the shield before the woman whose dancing is admired. Women acknowledge good dancers by *kulilitela* (ululating) and *kudlaliselala* (dancing in admiration).

If the king has already chosen yet another new *liphovela* (fiancée), he introduces her to the girls on the second day of dancing too. Those who are responsible for the role, adorn her with *emagwalagwala* (royal head feathers), and instantly the public understand what

that means. The second day is also the day when even *tintfombi temhlanga* display their *imvunulo* (traditional dress). Day eight is exclusively for feasting and returning home.

### 3.4.3 Ceremonial dress for *Umhlanga*<sup>93</sup>

The proper dress for the young women at this ceremony consists of *indlamu* (a very short bead skirt that reveals the buttocks) and *umgaco* (a cloth belt with woollen tassels that is worn across the body), going over one shoulder but revealing a part of the breasts. The thighs are bare but on the left side the *umjijimba* (long woollen tassels, fall decoratively.) An alternative to *indlamu* is an *indiloko* (a cotton skirt barely longer than *indlamu*) the bead skirt or a *lihiya* (a cloth long enough to go below the knees or down to the ankles). Bead bracelets are worn on the wrists, and on the upper arm the women wear an armband holding a colourful chiffon scarf. *Emagebesha* (beaded necklaces) and earrings are worn to complete the adornment. Preferably, they have long hair, combed out in a variety of styles. Princesses and the king's *emaphovela* (fiancées) have *emagwalagwala* (an array of red feathers from the *gwalagwala* bird). *Emafahlawane* (ankle rattles) enhance dancing.

In the past it was every girl's pride to wear *indlamu* (the beaded short skirt) as opposed to *indiloko* (the cotton and slightly longer skirt) and *emahiya* (cloth). The people associated *indiloko* with poverty, whereas, they associated the full *indlamu* and its accessories with wealth because it was worth a cow, and the poor could not afford it. The *umhlanga* dance ceremony was a time when *banumzane* (wealthy family men) displayed their wealth through their daughters' traditional dress. People did not encourage using *emahiya* (cloth), because they associated it with covering the very body which was to be displayed. During the pre-colonial period nakedness (as the people regard it today) was not known because often young women would walk around naked with only a few strings of beads on their waists.

When a young man waited by the river to court a young woman he loved, he used words of admiration for her thighs and her uncovered breasts. Having seen the breasts and thighs did not make any man rape a woman as the flimsy excuse is today for the villains.

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<sup>93</sup> See all the different parts of the *umhlanga* costume on appendix 11.

who accuse and molest girls wearing short skirts. However, at the *umhlanga* ceremony, the girls' outfit reveals almost the entire body and most young women nowadays feel real embarrassment at being obliged to come out publicly in this way, watched by men and women, including tourists. Sometimes those girls who are in higher institutions of learning have male classmates who attend just to watch the near-naked young women. During the 2005 Shiselweni region *umhlanga* dance, "noticeably, most of the maidens [sic] were not dressed in the full *imvumulo* gear but were clad in emahiya."<sup>94</sup> By way of concluding the ceremony, the king always commands that over twenty head of cattle be slaughtered for girls. They collect their pieces of meat and can go home.

The *umhlanga* dance ceremony has always achieved one of its broad aims; developing solidarity among the *tintfombi temhlanga*. The type of singing and dancing the girls do requires a good level of unity and cooperation among the girls. The aim of promoting their chastity is very difficult to measure. This is a sexualised display of the girls because as they dance before the Queen Mother, the king, and nation, their bodies are scrutinized, with a focus on their thighs, buttocks and breasts. It is said that the local specialist can tell if a girl has already started having sexual relations. Surrounding the *umhlanga* dance ceremony is the idea of placing value on the girls, as a sexual resource for the king in the first instance, the society in general and men in particular. It emphasises them as sexual rather than thinking, feeling, rational beings. They are exploited even by making them feel guilty if they do not participate in 'customary' practices. The girls do not own their bodies. This exploitation is positively labelled calling the girls the nation's pride.

In examining the experience and meaning of the *umhlanga* for young women, I draw on my own experience as a participant in the *umhlanga* dance. One of the most appreciated and alluring aspects of the ceremony was the week away from parental control. It was during this week that some girls had their first experience of having a boyfriend, but also sadly and dangerously sniffing stuff such as glue and benzyne<sup>95</sup>, and of having their first sexual intercourse. This is also a time when some men take advantage of the girls who

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<sup>94</sup> The Times of Swaziland: 25<sup>th</sup> September, 2005.

<sup>95</sup> Benzyne basically used among other things for dry cleaning clothes, but similar to glue, becomes an intoxicating spirit when a person sniffs it.

may want to experiment with going out with men who have money to give them. The fact that many girls fall pregnant during this time is also of great concern because it shows that the innocent girls indulge in unprotected sex even at the very time when the HIV/AIDS pandemic is at its worst. Many girls get infected at this stage.

The *umhlanga* ceremony worked well at the time it was founded. However, there has been great changes in the general lifestyle of the people to an extent that makes it problematic to simply transfer all practices that worked well in the past and impose them on people that live in a completely different era and who hold completely different values. For instance during the time of King Sobhuza II, who reigned from 1921 to 1982, apart from the life-threatening behaviour as some girls experiment with drinking, sniffing substances and sex, there were strong feelings of pride for participating in this national service. The climax of it all was the pleasure that resulted from singing and dancing very close to the king. In the 1970s when I participated in the ceremony, seeing the king was a very rare and special experience, unlike nowadays when the media has made it very easy to see King Mswati III frequently.

Bodily exposure, gave pride rather than embarrassment, in fact it was an embarrassment to *cover* the body fully. On the other hand, most contemporary young women prefer to use the *lihiya* (Swazi traditional cloth) as opposed to the *indlamu* (beaded short skirt). Very few girls who are already in control of their own lives however limited an extent, such as being university and college students, participate in this ceremony. Some of them dread the exposure of their body. The involvement of tourists and the media is at a very high level, which literally makes the girls the pride of the nation in a way similar to the places of interests such as the waterfalls, hills as well as the animals in game reserves.

My conclusion about the *umhlanga* dance is that it is now more than ever before, a political mechanism meant to control girls. The 'freedom' as the girls think of it is actually a dangerous exposure of *children* within a culture that does not encourage girls to make informed decisions. There is a real threat to the health of these girls because of their sexual availability to men under the cover of 'national pride'. The ceremony accords



the girls very minimal assertiveness. Its results are negative in that many girls' lives are ruined as a majority of them end up as school 'drop-outs' due to unplanned pregnancies. The other fact is that the 'virgin' status has long been disproven by the statistics of sexually active teenagers revealed by numerous research studies and the high rate of teenage pregnancy.

### **3.5 Conclusion of the chapter**

The examination of performance in Swaziland illustrates how women have acquired internalized oppression through repeatedly listening to and also saying words that affirm their oppression. Notably, some women use the same strategy to instil positive and empowering messages in their performances. The lives of the women in Swaziland have been affected by the messages they have listened to, and said repeatedly. The use of repetition instils ideologies into the women and girls which can also be reversed through repetition. "One of the major functions that oral performance should, or could serve, is the empowerment of the African woman for survival" (Bukonya, Austin, "Oracy and Female Empowerment in Africa" in Russell, Kasechula H. (ed.) *African Oral Literature* 2001: 32). Mamba concludes that grandmothers are among the best to impact on others through story telling as a result of their repeated listening to, and retelling stories:

The best artists in this genre are grandmothers who also listened to the same stories from their own grandmothers, and so on... (Mamba 1986: 6)

In conclusion, all the performance arts in the country are becoming effectively harnessed towards the development of women by first of all instilling that women are valuable even on their own. Now women are beginning to regard themselves as complete human beings who have equally valuable lives, different from men. This way they can become the subjects of their performances, and make decisions that are capable of designing the futures that they want. Apart from using the performances I have examined here, to pursue their development, some women have attempted to write plays to address the issues that affect them. The play-writing tradition follows what was started in South Africa. The next chapter examines the representation of women in plays written by the

South African pioneer playwright as well as plays written in Swaziland by an anthropologist who lived in the country and also by a Swazi woman.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Literary Drama in Swaziland: From H.I.E Dhlomo to Zodwa Motsa

#### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the presentation of women in four literary dramas: the works of H.I.E. Dhlomo, a pioneer playwright writing in English. I consider two of his plays: *Cetshwayo* and *Nongqauze: The Girl who killed to save*. Next, I explore the play, *A witch in my heart* by Hilda Kuper, an anthropologist, and finally *The Paper Bride*, a play, by the playwright Zodwa Motsa.

#### 4.1 Literary drama in Swaziland

In Swaziland literacy came into existence as part of education. Its main trigger was the demand for literature texts which were set within the country and which could be used in schools. There was also a need for the promotion of the *SiSwati* language, which led to the establishment of an association for Swazi writers.

##### 4.1.1 Literary drama and the language issue in Swaziland

Literacy is not very old in Swaziland; just about a century. It came through missionaries and their converts, who were mainly Xhosa and Zulu from South Africa. This led to the teaching of the Zulu language in Swazi schools as opposed to *SiSwati*, the language of the people. One of the first main texts to be read in Swaziland was therefore the Bible in Zulu with some Xhosa intonation.

When Queen Labotsibeni fully supported education in the country by constructing the early national schools in 1911, the teachers came from South Africa so the only languages taught in schools were Zulu and English. *SiSwati* was introduced in schools in 1969, a year after the country's independence. When *SiSwati* became part of the school curriculum, the only available published *Siswati* literature was written by Dr J.S.M.

Matsebula. He wrote books for each year as *SiSwati* advanced to higher levels of schooling. Thus, for a time, whilst the *SiSwati* language was used at the lower levels of school, in the upper levels, Zulu continued to be used.

However by 1976, when *SiSwati* reached secondary school level, there was a problem because there were no *SiSwati* literature books to cater for the teaching of literature at that level. There was a need for *SiSwati* books in all four genres of literature, the novel, the short story, poetry and drama. In addition to the four original literary works the rest were translations from either English or Zulu. One of works that was translated by Thembi Mthembu from English to *Siswati* was *A Witch in My Heart*, the first play ever written and set specifically in Swaziland. It was written in 1970 by Hilda Kuper, an anthropologist who lived among the Swazi people during the sixties and seventies. Twenty-one years later, in 1991 Zodwa Motsa,<sup>96</sup> a Swazi woman by birth wrote *Of Heroes and Men* a collection of three plays written in English, "Of Heroes and Men", "The Paper Bride", and "Shadows".

#### 4.1.2 The Pioneer Swazi Writers

In 1985 Thembi Mthembu, who had earlier translated Kuper's work into *SiSwati*, had been promoted to the position of Senior Inspector of *SiSwati* in schools. She organised two major workshops for Swazi people who were interested in creative writing. Facilitating the workshop on the writing of various genres of literature were experts from South Africa; Sibusiso Nyembezi, D.B.Z. Ntuli, E.S.Q. Zulu, and C.T Msimang, all eminent Zulu writers. All were either affiliated with the University of South Africa or Shuter and Shooter Publishers in South Africa. The Ministry of Education funded the workshop, making it easy for all interested people to attend.

The result of the first two workshops on creative writing in Swaziland was the publication of two anthologies of short stories; *Ingcamu* (food to be eaten on a long journey) and *Idubukele* (Come one, come all, to a feast!) The majority of the writers were

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<sup>96</sup> At the time of publication the author, Zodwa Motsa used the surname Sithebe, but in this thesis, at her request, I use her real surname Motsa, the name she officially now uses.

students and teachers at school, college and university levels. Some were ex-teachers working for parliament, adult literacy and other related occupations. The *SiSwati* panel selected the two anthologies to be taught at junior and senior secondary school levels. In 1987 there were two other major workshops, which produced more books in all four genres of literature. The participants of those early workshops who contributed in the anthologies that were published and used in schools formed an association of writers they named *Umdlndla*<sup>97</sup> Swaziland Writers and Authors Association (USWAA). The membership of USWAA increased and they have since been continuously publishing books. All the books are in *SiSwati*.

#### **4.1.3 Women in the literary works of the pioneer Swazi writers**

Most of the Zulu literary works that were studied in schools before *SiSwati* came into the curriculum featured a crude binary division as a representation of women, with extremes of 'good' and 'bad', so most of the works of the early Swazi writers followed this pattern. 'Good' women included those who supported their families, especially their in-laws; the less talkative ones; the diligent ones; the docile ones; those who did not fight their co-wives; the patient ones; basically, women submissive to their husbands and in-laws. The 'bad' women included those who were 'loose' and had multiple lovers; 'unfaithful' wives who cheated on their husbands; 'jealous' wives; girls who snatched other women's husbands; 'cruel' mothers-in-law 'stubborn' and 'unruly' women who wanted their way in life and a lot more women that society found fault with. The writers made an effort to fit into their works the expectations of the conservatives of Swazi culture. Some of the works had extreme characters that were either too 'good' or too 'bad'. Both men and women writers wrote work which strongly classified women into these categories.

The male writers wrote about 'good' and 'bad' women, as a way to keep the Swazi social standard of having women 'under control.' The women wrote in a similar fashion, probably to keep up with Swazi societal expectations, and become acceptable writers in the country as well. The publications of the Swazi writers were mainly for use in schools, so the works were monitored to prevent any theme not in line with the official values of

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<sup>97</sup> *Umdlndla* is the *SiSwati* term for enthusiasm.

the Swazi society. A few of the women wrote works that challenged the expectations of Swazi culture conservatives. Some of the literary works, exposed issues of women's oppression in the country, but they did not provide much possible solutions.

Also, at the time the Swazi writers became active, the motive of the innovations by the Senior Inspector of *SiSwati* was to promote the language. At the time in the country, politically, people were silent due to the banning of political parties during the reign of King Sobhuza II. It seemed as if every Swazi was happy with the country's politics, and the king being an absolute monarchy. The few Swazi people who were for a multi-party system were silenced so their oppositional activities went underground. Generally, society discouraged any critical thinking that would challenge 'traditions'.

The 'peaceful' atmosphere in Swaziland ended with the death of King Sobhuza II. The interregnum *Liqogo* regime that followed and the subsequent overthrow of Queen Dzeliwe were unexpected and unusual events that left people uneasy. Fear to speak intensified. In the political unrest very few Swazi people felt brave enough to challenge the status quo and a substantial number of people were subjected to sixty-day detention. Among these vocal critics were a few women who used subtle ways of addressing issues of concern. These included Zodwa Motsa whose works address some of the issues which people in Swaziland at the time, could not openly challenge. Although her work is in English, to a great extent, Motsa's first work, *Of Heroes and Men* was influenced by one of the Zulu literary works, *Uqomisa mina nje uqomisa iliba* (Your courting me is courting a grave by Musa Andries J. Blose. However, before looking at the works of Motsa and Kuper, I consider two plays by the man who paved the way in play-writing in English by black South Africans: H.I.E. Dhlomo.

#### **4.2 H.I.E. Dhlomo: His life and background to his works**

Herbert I.E. Dhlomo is a 'key literary figure... and pioneer of modern black drama in South Africa' (Visser, N and Couzen, T., *Introduction to H.I.E. Dhlomo collected Works*, 1985: xv). Dhlomo, born on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1903 of Christian parents, was one of a few privileged South Africans, who were educated up to the level of teacher training college

during his time. Dhlomo developed a love of literature as a result of the influence of his teachers:

From teachers like Darlow, Burnsberg and Miss Clarke the students acquired the idea that the test of a nation's civilisation was its achievements in literature."  
(Couzens 1985: 51)

During Dhlomo's time there were doubts about African people's academic competence. Literary scholars of the time such as members of the British Drama League instilled into African people that they lacked ability to absorb developed concepts and skills in literature and sciences. Evidence of this mindset comes out in statements such as, "The African native can hardly distinguish fact from fiction..." (British Drama League pamphlets of 1938 in Steadman, Ian, "Alternative Theatre: Fifty years of performance in Johannesburg" in White, Landeg and Couzens, Tim (eds.) *Literature and Society in South Africa* 1984: 139). This ideology affected some African people who tended to believe it as Elleke Boehmer observes:

The effects of empire on colonized peoples, and colonized responses to invasion, usually appear as mere traces in the writing of the time. Imperial texts suggest, therefore, how it was possible for a world system which presided over lives of millions to legitimate itself by way of myth and metaphor while at the same time masking suffering (Boehmer, Elleke, *Colonial & Postcolonial Literature* 1995: 20-21).

While some of the African people internalised these demeaning negative labels without even being aware of it, others realised that they were false and destructive to African people in general but particularly to the young and upcoming generation. They therefore took on the responsibility of correcting these biased perspectives. Boehmer comments; "Overdetermined by stereotype, the characterization of indigenous peoples tended to screen out their agency, diversity, resistance, thinking, voices" (Boehmer 1995: 21). One way of challenging the stereotypes was by African people demonstrating their own potential in literature.

Dhlomo was one such person. He decided to motivate his people by his active involvement in literature production. In 1932 Dhlomo became the founder of the Bantu

Dramatic Society in Johannesburg, with the intention of encouraging 'Bantu' playwrights and developing African dramatic and operatic art (Steadman 1984:138.) As one of the first few elites of South Africa soon to be known as 'New Africans' Dhlomo engaged in literature production:

[Dhlomo is] a crucial point of reference for, an investigation not only of the history of an 'African National Theatre' but of the troubled relationship between theatre and social change in South Africa in general (Kruger, Loren, *The Drama of South Africa: Plays, Pageants and Publics Since 1910* 1999:49).

The 'New African' category was a reference to the enlightened Africans who neither belonged to the 'Tribal African' group nor the 'neither-nor' Africans. The 'Tribal Africans' were those who accepted "the white man's dictatorship over the blacks, at work displaying actions of docility and foolishness" (Couzens 1985:32). The 'neither-nor' Africans were those who were not sure of themselves; "neither wholly African, nor fully Europeanised" (ibid). The 'New African' category was the group that did not abandon their roots as Africans and yet were eager to accommodate the fact that the South African land was occupied by people from diverse backgrounds:

This class consists mostly of organised urban workers who were awakening to the issues at stake and to the power of organised intelligently-led mass action and of progressive thinking African intellectuals and leaders...The New African wants a social order where every South African will be free to express himself and his personality fully, live and breathe freely, and have a part in shaping the destiny of his country; a social order in which race, colour and creed will be a badge neither of privilege nor of discrimination...(ibid)

As one of the New Africans, Dhlomo wrote to combat the limited thinking and to prove to the world that an African person could also have literary skills and produce work of the highest standard:

In South Africa, one man was aware of the need to revive African drama for the westernised black man. In 1936 H.I.E Dhlomo said that dramatic movements should be started to interest people in African history and tradition.' (Barnett A. Ursula, *A Vision of Order: a study of Black South African Literature in English (1914-1980)*, 1983: 228)



According to Dhlomo, 'modern drama was not a mere emotional entertainment':

It is a source of ideas, a cultural and educational factor, an agency for propaganda, a social institution, and above all, it is literature....We want African playwrights who will dramatise and expand philosophy of African History. We want dramatic representation of African Serfdom, Oppression, Exploitation and Metamorphosis...The African dramatist has an important part to fill...He [She] can expose evil and corruption and not suffer libel as newspaper men may- and do; he can guide and preach to his [her] people as preachers cannot do...(Bantu World, 21 October 1933).

It is this perspective that places the works of Dhlomo within a broad understanding of Theatre-for-Development concepts which I explore more fully in chapters five and six. It is also remarkable that although Dhlomo lived at a period when gender sensitivity was not addressed as it is now, he was careful enough to use pronouns referring to both genders when talking about a dramatist who could be either male or female.

When Dhlomo wrote his first play *The girl who killed to save*, in 1936, his aim was to implement some of his ideas about modern drama, through an exploration of African history. The play is based on a major historical event of 1856/1857, at a time of widespread famine when the Gcaleka ethnic group of the Xhosa people experienced a huge and tragic loss of life due to the cattle-killing order that had been given by the prophetess Nongqause.

In the historical event 'there arose among the AmaXhosa the most renowned of their seers, Umhlakaza, assisted by his daughter, Nongqause, a prophesying medium, who in all likelihood exercised powers of a ventriloquist (Visser and Couzens 1985: 3).

As a result of her powers, Nongqause ordered the Xhosa people to kill all their livestock, especially cattle. She professed to have communed with the dead heroes of the nation, who told her that the slaughter should take place at a fixed date, "27<sup>th</sup> February, 1857" (ibid). After the slaughter, there would emerge from the ground, vast herds of cattle and in the whole country there would be lots of grain. On that appointed day, furthermore, all the non-believers of the prophecy would be driven into the sea together with all the white

people. The prophecy did not come true. Many people died of starvation, and ironically, the survivors were saved by the Europeans in the Colony.

This historical event motivated Mary Waters, a missionary to write her play *uNongqause* in the Xhosa language in 1924. Waters addresses issues surrounding the historical event in a way that makes missionaries very important:

The missionary is the most important presence in the play – his repeated commentary on the action contributes to an **overall** impression that the cattle-killing incident in actuality formed part of a divine plan to redeem errant blacks from their unnecessary rebellious ways' (Orkin, Martin, *Drama and the South African State* 1991: 29).

Quite a number of scholars conclude that when Dhlomo wrote his first play in English, *The girl who killed to save* in 1936, he did so to counteract the attitude of literary scholars of the time. The play by Mary Waters placed Africans in a secondary position.

Dhlomo took a conscious stand against the established norms and introduced the first creative alternative into the work of the Bantu Drama Society' (Steadman 1984:139).

Agreeing with Ian Steadman, Martin Orkin also argues that Dhlomo wrote to challenge the ideas perpetrated in the play by Mary Waters, *uNongqause*. He states that Dhlomo's play "evidences attempts to contest the colonialist discourses everywhere evident in *uNongqause*" (Orkin 1991: 32).

#### **4.2.1 The play, *The Girl who killed to save***

Dhlomo's play assumes the same names as those of the people in a historical event that occurred in 1857, the same year his play is set. The historical event happened at the time when missionaries in Southern Africa preached to people to repent of their sins and accept the religion that they had brought. As the people turned to the new religion there arose a man who counteracted what the missionaries were doing:

Umhlakaza preached a new gospel, which was none other than a resurrection from the dead. Nongqause declared that she had held converse with the spirits of old heroes of the tribe [sic]... (Visser and Couzens 1985: 3)

Similar to the historical event, in this play the prophetess, Nongqause claims she has had a vision and has heard voices from ancestors who told her to tell the people to kill their cattle. Nongqause's uncle, Mhlakaza and the chief Kreli are the two people who understand the prophetess' vision. They place her and a group of girls of her own age under the care of an old woman where they are confined in a hut.

#### **4.2.1.1 Synopses of *The girl who killed to save***

Dhlomo's *The Girl who killed to save* is a one act play with five scenes. The first scene takes place in a hut. An old woman is plaiting Nongqause's hair. Other girls with pretty faces and dressed in 'tribal' style are singing and dancing as they work. Two of them are roasting meat. As they work they talk about love, men and women. One of the girls sings a song they regard as Nongqause's song. Nongqause tells her to stop because she hates the song. An old man enters and complains about another man, Selanto who had refused to pay *lobola* for his daughter but now that there is an order to kill cattle he wants to pay *lobola*. The old man complains, saying that his receiving *lobola* at a time when everyone has to kill cattle means that he will get nothing for his daughter.

Just as Nongqause tries to answer the old man, a messenger reports that Chief Kreli is coming. The old woman orders everyone to hurry and get Nongqause ready for the chief's coming, whose frequent visits Nongqause hates. Kreli enters accompanied by Mhlakaza and other men who have come to watch Nongqause re-enact what happened at the river on the day she got the prophecy. Mhlakaza gives Nongqause some medicine to drink and sprinkles other medicine on her body before she speaks.

Dhlomo specifically gives the stage instruction that Nongqause 'feigns' (Scene 1: 8) to be in a trance. This direction by Dhlomo shows that, as a writer, he deliberately wants the readers to be aware that Nongqause's vision is not authentic. Nongqause laughs, cries, spins around and falls down on her knees and hands, acting out what took place at the

river. She adds what her uncle, Mhlakaza proposes, citing the names of the Xhosa ancestors saying she hears them prophecy that the AmaXhosa will win. After Nongqause's performance the visitors shout joyfully saying they believe the prophecy. All men leave the hut, except for Baba, an old man who wants to speak to Nongqause privately. Another man, Mlunguze enters and calls Baba a dog for waiting behind to talk to Nongqause:

**Mlunguze:** I must talk to Nongqause, ma. You Baba, I shall see you when we leave –

**Baba:** Dog, who gave you –

*(Mlunguze strikes at him and they exchange one or two blows using sticks when Nongqause, seeing this and the old woman crying, steps forward.)*

**Nongqause:** Fools, the Chief, the Lion, wants me to be his chief wife. If you don't stop your fight I shall tell him about it, and you shall be slain. Go (Scene 1: 9).

The two men start fighting over Nongqause; both want to marry her. She tells them to stop. She tells them that Kreli wants to make her his chief wife, their fighting over her, endangers them. As they leave Nongqause sits down heavily, buries her face in her hands and sobs. The old woman tries to comfort her, telling her that she is the luckiest woman in all Xhosaland because she rules men and the whole nation worships her. Nongqause responds that what seems to be her power is her misery. She tells the old woman that she hates being loved by *all* men and yet has none as her own. Nongqause also tells the old woman that the only man she loves is Mazwi, who loved her even before the prophecy. Significantly, she also reveals that her greatest worry is that she is not sure if what she tells the people is true. At the river she heard strange sounds indeed, but her uncle Mhlakaza and Kreli assured her that what she heard were voices of the ancestors.

Nongqause tells that Mhlakaza used his divination bones and medicine to help her 'understand' the prophecy. She doubts the truthfulness of her prophecy. Her lover, Mazwi does not believe it either. She is worried that if the prophecy is not true, the people who believe her may perish because of her. As Nongqause speaks the old woman also begins to doubt. She secretly sneaks Nongqause's lover, Mazwi, into the hut where he wants Nongqause to elope with him. He has already bribed the guards, his old friends. Nongqause declines to go with Mazwi and cries, falling down on her knees before him. She says she thinks of the truth and the people. As the scene ends Nongqause's song is

heard from a distance. Dhlomo deliberately brings the sound of the distant song here because it symbolises the voice of the two men behind the prophecy. Dhlomo wants to alert us that even if Nongqause tries to make her own judgement in this matter, the controlling voice of Kreli and Mhlakaza will interfere with her and they will override her own judgement.

The second scene takes place in a cattle kraal. A messenger announces that Kreli is coming. He enters with Mhlakaza. As Kreli enters his bard says his praises. Kreli announces that he has summoned his people to expose the 'sinners who do not believe the prophecy.' The people form a circle, sing and clap. Mhlakaza performs in the centre of the circle. He dances himself into an ecstasy. As he dances, he claims he can hear the cattle lowing in the caves, waiting to come to life. He also claims he sees a cloud of risen warriors armed heavily, trying to come and help the Xhosa people against the white man. He adds that 'doubters' are preventing both warriors and cattle from appearing.

To end this scene Dhlomo presents Chief Kreli as a tyrant that coerces his people to whatever he tells them without considering their own preferences. He shows that Kreli and Mhlakaza are using the unsuspecting people to fight the Europeans who are taking over rule in his land. To emphasize this point, Dhlomo makes Kreli's soldiers to break into a warrior song, showing that they obey his command.

The third scene is a room in Mr Brownlee, the commissioner's house in Gaika. Mr Brownlee is with his wife, Nomaliso, their Xhosa servant and a missionary. They are discussing the rumour about Xhosa people killing their cattle and how something needs to be done to stop the 'madness'. Mr Brownlee interprets the action as a 'scheme-plot...to starve the people into fighting the European' (Scene 3: 16). As they talk, a messenger arrives to say that the people are continuing killing their cattle.

A second messenger comes in and reports that many people from the Kobongo Church Mission have been killed because they refuse to kill their cattle. A third messenger enters and reports that other converts are in danger of being killed. Mr Brownlee decides to go

there, alone. The missionary blesses him and asks God to protect him. Mrs Brownlee tells her husband that when duty calls, love has to be sacrificed and when duty calls, life is endangered. The missionary praises Mr Brownlee as a brave man, and Mr Brownlee credits his wife as noble and being the one behind his strength. She cries. Mr Brownlee becomes emotional too. They embrace each other and the scene ends.

The fourth scene takes place near the commissioner's house. Many victims of the prophecy are brought in for help. Some are weak from hunger and thirst whilst others have been injured. Mr Brownlee, his wife, his brother Hugh, Nomaliso the Xhosa servant, and three male Xhosa assistants stand near a wagon full of food supplies. Mr Brownlee, his wife, Nomaliso and Buku, one of the assistants provide food to the hungry victims. Mr Brownlee's brother, Hugh and the other men tend the injured. As they work they talk. One of the hungry women sees the food and shouts joyfully and says the prophecy was true, the ancestors have come to life and there is food. She realises that the food is not from the ancestors and shouts that the prophecy was all a lie:

**Awoman victim:** *[Brought in carried. She is quite emaciated and has a wild look]*  
O, O, mm, mm, O *[Her groaning is heard above the general noise of eating, talk and other groans. They give her food. Suddenly she jumps up.]* Ha, ha, ha, ha! Cattle, cattle, corn, corn! The great day has come. We eat. We conquer. New life! Happiness! *[Suddenly changes her expression.]* No! No! They lied! They lied! The chiefs and their witchdoctors lied! Lied! We have been deceived. The missionaries and the commissioner wre right!

The final scene is the interior of a Christian Xhosa home. Daba, a Xhosa convert is lying in bed because he is very ill. His wife is with two young women, Nomsa and Lumka. They comfort her. Someone knocks at the door. Four women and one man come in. One of them, an old woman asks how Daba is. The man of the party suggests that they pray. They sing a hymn and after that the man makes a lengthy prayer, citing the names of important men of the Bible from Abraham to David. When he has finished praying he offers some medicine to be given to Daba when he wakes up.

There is another knock at the door. Two men with four women enter. They, too, have come to check Daba. One of the two men says they have come to pray. The man of the

first party says they have already prayed but can do again. As they get ready to pray Daba starts groaning and pointing at water. They give him water to drink and he falls back heavily on a pillow. A third knock is heard at the door. This time it is the missionary, another white man and a black man who looks westernized. The missionary introduces the white man as a doctor and the black man as Tiyo Soga, who has been studying in Scotland and will be working among his people as the new African missionary.

Tiya Soga tells all the people to leave the room except for Daba's family so that the doctor may attend to Daba. The doctor checks Daba's pulse and inserts a thermometer to check his temperature. He tells them in English that it is 'hopeless' but the Xhosa women do not understand what the English term "hopeless" means. As Nomsa and Lumka simultaneously ask what it is, Daba suddenly sits up and tells his wife to come to him. His facial expression is changed and "unearthly" (Scene 5: 29). Daba tells them that he can see a beautiful crowd singing. He says they are the crowd that died during the Great Famine, meaning the famine that followed the period when the Xhosa people killed their cattle because of Nongqause's prophecy. He says they are surrounding Nongqause, thanking her and laughing with her. They tell her that hunger and destitution led them to the missionary who gave them his divine message which led them to God's hands. Daba says Nongqause also laughs and sings, saying she was earnest but ignorant. The people Daba sees all call Nongqause their liberator from "superstition and from the rule of ignorance" (ibid). Daba says the people he sees are not dressed in clothes and blankets, but light so that their bodies and sex cannot be seen. As Daba speaks he stretches out his trembling arms and claims he is reaching out to Nongqause to lead him to the Master. He falls back and dies. The play ends.

#### **4.2.1.2 Issues in *The girl who killed to save***

Dhlomo's play addresses some gender issues which are absent in Mary Waters' play, especially *lobolo*. Orkin compares the two plays and states "whereas in the earlier play Nongqause is merely a mechanism, *The girl who killed to save* presents her as a young woman who cares above all for the future of her people" (Orkin 1991: 32). This gesture gives credit to Dhlomo as a writer, who does not take women for granted in his works.

From the beginning Dhlomo's play demonstrates gendered chores among the Xhosa and other Nguni people, where girls and women are responsible for preparing food for people in a homestead. From the beginning of the play everyone's attention is on Nongqause. The old woman who is her guard plaits her hair, and the other girls pronounce that they envy her for her prestigious and acclaimed position. The girls are dressed in ethnic style that leaves most of their bodies bare. It is part of the culture for girls and young women to dress in this manner, but the missionaries taught that it was nakedness and a way of the heathens (C.C. Watts, *Dawn in Swaziland* 1922). By describing the girls' dress code which is then regarded as half nakedness, yet had been an acceptable way of dressing for girls and young women in the past, Dhlomo counteracts the negative labelling of the traditional African dress code by missionaries. This also betrays and exposes the wickedness of the men who sexually abuse women in various ways and give as an excuse the fact that the women's bodies had been partially exposed. Dhlomo's explicit description shows that men can see as they had always seen women 'half naked' without having to sexually harass them.

Performance has always been a way of life in this culture, so the girls sing a dancing song and work swinging their bodies rhythmically to the music. Here Dhlomo's presentation serves as a development and empowerment of his cultural practices which are at stake due to the teaching by missionaries that indigenous songs and dances are heathen. Here, he portrays the women as good people who had no 'evil' about them, but only singing whilst preparing food for the men. The play states that the women were roasting meat for men. This practice is questionable and Dhlomo's bringing it in here is a way of challenging the oppression of women who have to roast meat for men and never eat it themselves. The over-abundance of meat in this case is an exceptional one because cattle are being slaughtered. Dhlomo also addresses other cultural practices which objectify women such as *lobolo*.

This play addresses the *lobolo* custom. An old man arrives into the special hut and complains to Nongqause about Selanto, another man who refused to pay *lobolo* for his



daughter before the prophecy came, but when cattle became valueless, because they were going to be slaughtered anyway, he changed his mind and wanted to pay *lobolo*. The old man complains that Selanto even claimed more daughters from the complainant. Nongqause tells the man not to worry because soon there would be a lot of cattle in the new life soon to come. A man's claiming more daughters from a household where he has paid *lobolo* is culturally acceptable and it is called *kulamuta*. Through what the old man says, Dhlomo exposes that both *lobolo* and *kulamuta* cultural practices make women commodities of wealth exchange.

#### **4.2.1.3 Manipulation of women and by men**

One striking fact about Nongqause is her beauty. Dhlomo portrays Nongqause as a woman who does not only have a beautiful face, but one who has also made a great commitment to save her people. Traditionally, in this society, beautiful girls are regarded as empty-headed people who are usually not well behaved. This is reflected in the idiomatic expressions such as *ikhiwane elihle ligcwala izimpethu* (a beautiful fig is full of worms), which suggests that beautiful women are usually of bad or weak character. In this society women are said to be of weak character when they have multiple lovers or when they go from one man to the next.

The prejudice against women as having weak character prevailed during Dhlomo's time, as now and was a common theme in Zulu literature, in stories where beautiful women were portrayed as easily available and sexually used by men. Contrary to this kind of presentation of women, Dhlomo's beautiful Nongqause is not obsessed with her beauty, but committed to helping her people. The two men who have authority over her: chief, Kreli and her uncle, Mhlakaza manipulate her beauty for their interests.

Through Chief Kreli and Mhlakaza, Dhlomo demonstrates how men in power can assault women emotionally in this culture. As a result of the 'power' they accord Nongqause as a prophesying medium, chief Kreli and Mhlakaza remove her from a normal life of interacting with the rest of the people. She is in seclusion, in a hut where she lives almost as a trophy for a show or as a 'doll' to be adorned whenever the chief comes in.

Nongqause sits as the old woman plaits her hair, whereas the other girls sing and dance as they do work such as grinding corn and stamping mealies. They sing and dance as they work, probably to make the work lighter as one of the girl's states, "music lightens work and gives strength" (Scene 1: 5). As a young woman who already has a lover, Mazwi, she needs to be enjoying life meeting her lover, but Kreli uses his position as leader to make it impossible for her to mingle with the rest of the community.

The other girls envy Nongqause as the central figure, but she does not perceive her position in the same way. Nongqause perceives the importance of her role to rest in her helping her people rather than the public show the others make out of it. Although Nongqause is committed to helping her people she portrays a strong aversion for the song that is a vital part of her position as a prophetess. When one of the girls breaks into the song, the prophetess interrupts her:

**Nongqause:** Stop! I am tired of that song. I hate it. I have to sing it each time father and Kreli bring people to hear my vision.

**Nozizwe:** But I like to sing while I work. Music lightens work and gives strength.

**Tandeka:** But we must obey Nongqause, Nozizwe, and not sing. She is our leader – and is Queen of Xhosaland today.

**Nongqause:** I am not against your singing. I like it. Only sing any other song but that (Scene 1: 5)

Nongqause's dislike of the song reflects her own doubts about the authenticity of her vision and shows the audience that she feels she is being manipulated by Mhlakaza and Kreli. Within her there is conflict and turmoil. Nongqause is fully committed to saving her people, but she is not sure if the message to kill all the cattle or the means by which it is supposedly being transmitted; voices of ancestors is actually true. As the conflict within her escalates she increasingly questions the idea of the vision. The old woman attempts to assure her that the spirits spoke to her indeed, but Nongqause is not really sure she heard voices:

**Old woman:** You are a clever girl, and no wonder the spirits spoke to you. But you are not old enough to appreciate the deeper things of life my child. There are things greater – I do not say nobler – than love between a man and a woman. You are fortunate in –

**Nongqause:** I am not. Listen. I did hear strange sounds- not voices- near the river. Father and the elephant assured me, after using the bones and medicine, the sounds were the voices of our ancestors. But are their interpretations correct? Why did not the spirits speak to me in the language I understand instead of in the wonderful but meaningless sounds? Yes, the sounds were strange. But was it the truth? (Scene 1: 9-10).

Nongqause's questioning the authenticity of her role is a vital element of Theatre-for-Development where people continually question what they are doing and examine if it is indeed for a good cause or not.

Dhlomo validates Nongqause's doubts through Mr Brownlee who perceives the prophecy as chief Kreli's "scheme-plot" (Scene 2: 16) against the white government. When the white settlers came to Southern Africa, they used tricks to get cattle and land from the native occupants of the land<sup>98</sup>. As a way of resisting the white settlers from taking both land and cattle from the indigenous people Kreli employs the cattle-killing strategy, which explains that he is the power behind prophetess Nongqause's voice. Kreli would rather lose all the cattle than see them taken away from his people. Chief Kreli abuses his leadership position and what he does is genocidal. Its tragedy lies in that he coerces the nation into this exercise by means of treachery. He deprives his people from making their own choices in life, starting with Nongqause and the old woman. He also kills all the people who do not want to embrace the prophecy, and therefore refuse to kill their cattle:

**Kreli:** ...They must kill all cattle and destroy all grain. If not –see my warriors who will fall on them and eat them with the spear. Those who escape the warriors will perish with the Europeans on the day of fulfilment of the prophecies of Mhlakaza. Our race cannot suffer because of individuals. Individuals must lose themselves in the race. Kreli will kill the defaulters. Kreli will triumph over the European. Kreli will rule over all the country. Go! (*Kreli stands with legs apart, right hand clasping spear and left hand pointing out in front. The soldiers burst into the warrior's song...*) (Scene 2: 15).

Kreli's gesture clearly shows that he and Mhlakaza's mission is a political as opposed to a religious one. In the centre of his endeavour to fight the Europeans, Kreli utilises women; both young and old. Through the character of the old woman, Dhlomo portrays

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<sup>98</sup> See chapter 2 the case of how King Mbandzeni of Swaziland lost his land.

how this society deploys old women as custodians of cultural practices, whether they themselves embrace those practices or not. The old woman seems to be in a similar and paradoxical position to Nongqause: both are placed in positions of power, yet they are powerless because of their very positions of power. What they do is not what stems from their own hearts. The men in positions of power coerce women to unquestioningly obey their orders whether the women agree with them or not. In spite of her own doubts, the old woman tells Nongqause not to shout because she might be killed. This shows that chief Kreli manipulates her; giving her a position of 'authority' as Nongqause's guard and as a voice to convince the prophetess when she doubts. The old woman tries hard to convince Nongqause that her vision is authentic, and for the benefit of the people:

**Old Woman:** Yes my child. I am sure the interpretations of your father are correct. Mhlakaza is a gifted seer, you know.

**Nongqause:** I know. At times I feel pride and self-assurance come up in my breast when I think I shall be the means of saving my people...But at other times, especially when I lie awake at night or when I think of Mazwi, I fear, fear, fear. (*Stands up only to sink down*) (Scene1: 10).

Dhlomo uses the old woman and the girls who surround Nongqause as representatives of the situation in society where the patriarchal powers employ women as instruments in the oppression of other women, instead of providing support. This is evident when Kreli is about to arrive. The old woman gets into a frenzy ordering the girls about and telling them to adorn Nongqause before the chief arrives. Although Nongqause is aware that Kreli is not doing everything in her honour, but manipulating her for his own self interests, she is helpless. She exclaims that she loathes the attention the chief gives her:

**Old woman:** Quick, my children! Put away the things! Help me get Nongqause ready! (*Some get the place tidy; others help Nongqause with her decorative wearings, and paint her face and body with a reddish dye*). Hurry! Work! Here, here! That's right!

**Nongqause:** I am tired of these frequent visits and what they mean. Nonsizi wished to be Nongqause. Ha! Ha! The ambitious and great know no happiness. Happiness happens – It is not the result of any known cause...To be adored and talked of by the whole country is misery. These men love not me, but my fame and position. My heart belongs to Mazwi who loves me truly because he loved me before I had my vision! He is strong, wise, brave, and will not kill cattle even to please us... (Scene 1: 7)

Having heard Nongqause express her aversion to Kreli's visits, one would expect to see her showing no compliance to his commands when he arrives. However, to show how manipulated she is, as soon as he arrives, Nongqause stops complaining and complies with consulting the ancestors. This contradictory behaviour demonstrates that she is under the control of Mhlakaza and Kreli. She does as they tell her and performs to convince Kreli's visitors, even though she has already indicated that she is unhappy and not very sure about the authenticity of the voices she claims to have heard. Through this conflict, Dhlomo demonstrates the turmoil that sometimes goes on within women who have to listen to the inner voice within them, and also be compelled to adhere to conflicting external voices from the men in authority over them. In this case, it would be noble for Nongqause to follow what she deems right in her heart, but that decision would deprive her of the 'great life' the chief Kreli intends for her. It would also endanger her own life.

Dhlomo exposes how elderly men abuse their daughters through Mhlakaza. As Nongqause's uncle, Mhlakaza assumes the role of a father or guardian over her. He makes an agreement with chief Kreli in a way similar to those men who enter into agreement with elderly wealthy men to marry their young daughters. When the men arrange the marriages they do not consider the opinions of the young women at all. Normally they present it in a way that convinces the young woman that all is done to her best interest because the wealthy man guarantees her security in terms of provision. The so-called fatherly 'love and care' is just a 'business transaction' by selfish men and it needs addressing. Dhlomo addresses it, although, in a blunt way. The fact that chief Kreli wants the young and beautiful Nongqause for a wife is obvious, and is spelt out in the fact that no man is allowed to see Nongqause. As we see when Baba, an old man tries to court Nongqause and the old woman warns him against it:

**Baba:** Oh! Nongqause. I love you with all my heart. You shall be my chief wife and everything I have –

**Old Woman:** Get out, Baba. Kreli wants no man to see or speak to Nongqause  
(Scene 1: 8).

Dhlomo further demonstrates the dilemma women face through the old woman, who, having attempted to convince Nongqause to comply with the chief's orders, also experiences doubts and has a change of heart. She softens as she hears Nongqause talk of her love for Mazwi. Without chief Kreli's knowledge, the old woman assists the young lovers by secretly sneaking Mazwi into the hut. She admits to Nongqause that she is also beginning to be affected by her doubts:

**Old Woman:** (*Infected by Nongqause's doubts at last.*) I never thought about it that way before. But don't shout. Do sit down, my child. Don't try to run away. They would kill me. I'm your guard remember. (Scene 1: 11)

Allowing Mazwi into the hut is dangerous for the old woman to do, but she is also torn between forces. Although she is assigned to serve the interests of the chief by protecting and enforcing the idea of the vision on Nongqause, a part of her understands the pain of young lovers who are not allowed to meet and talk to each other. Also, she is affected by the prophetess' doubts, and realises that there might be a point in Nongqause's doubting hearing voices. When the old woman allows Mazwi into the hut, he wants to elope with Nongqause, but she declines.

**Mazwi:** Come, run away with me, now, now. We can easily escape. The guards in the North side are my old pals whom I have bribed. Come escape from yourself – escape from death.

**Nongqause:** I cannot. I dare not -- will not.

**Mazwi:** Fool, why not? What holds you back? What ails you?

**Nongqause:** (*Falling on her knees before him, rapt in pain.*) The people! The Truth! (*From the distance Nongqause's girl companions are heard singing Nongqause's song.*) (Scene 1: 11).

Superficially, it may look like Nongqause has a choice to make whether to elope with Mazwi or not, but the reality is that she has no real choice. She tries to follow her heart but fails because she is trapped in a difficult situation:

**Nongqause:** ...The people! The people! They will perish! They will starve! Tears! Misery! Woe is me!

**Old woman:** Don't shout. You will be heard and killed.

**Nongqause:** Let them kill me. Death is better than the pangs of uncertainty, than the misery of indecision. I help them because I honestly believe we shall get new cattle and grain...

**Old woman:** ...Don't try to run away. They would kill me. I'm your guard, remember... (Scene 1: 10)

After having heard the old woman's plea, Nongqause has no choice because she cannot live with the guilt of having an old woman killed just because she ran away with her lover. She is also bound by her uncertainty about the prophecy. If she runs away yet the prophecy was real, it would mean that she had betrayed her people; so she makes the difficult decision not to elope with Mazwi. Through Nongqause's decision Dhlomo portrays her as a woman who is genuinely a leader who has the best interests of her people at heart as opposed to her own, which is to a great extent a good quality of a leader.

#### **4.2.1.4 Heroic Women**

In the last scene of the play Dhlomo makes a presentation of women who have strengths. The Xhosa women who form part of the Christian community, including Nomsa and Lumka portray love and care. They support the wife of Daba, the man who is very ill and about to die by keeping her company together with the missionaries who pay Daba and his house frequent visits. It is not very clear whether these women care because of the communal nature that prevails among the rest of the Xhosa community or because of the communal spirit that prevails among the Christians.

As Daba is about to die he proclaims that he can see a beautiful crowd which comprise the people "who perished in the Great Famine" (Scene 5: 29). His face brightens up and he claims that the people he sees are grateful for what appeared as their plight because the hunger led them to the missionary and his heavenly message, which ushered them to the hands of God. He claims that although Nongqause was ignorant in her message, she was genuinely helping her people. Significantly, Dhlomo shares his own opinions through Daba's words:

**Daba:** ...So there is triumph in death; there is finding in death; there is beauty in death. Nongqause laughs and tells them that she was really earnest but was ignorant.

They laugh and sing. They call her their Liberator from Superstition and from the rule of Ignorance. These people are dressed, not in karosses and blankets as we are, but in light – Light that makes it impossible to see their bodies or distinguish their sex... There she comes to us. I greet you Nongqause. Yes, I come. Yes, thank you, do lead me to the Master. O Nongqause, the Liberator! (*Falls back dead...*) (Scene 5: 29).

Dhlomo presents Nongqause as a heroic figure from the beginning to the end of the play. In the first scene Nongqause appears to be the patron of the prophecy of cattle that will come after the people have killed all their existing cattle. From Nongqause's own uncertainties Dhlomo makes us suspicious of Kreli and Mhlakaza. He makes Nongqause an outstanding leader who is genuinely committed to the good course of her people, yet she is entangled within the schemes of the two male 'leaders.' To maintain Nongqause's heroic status Dhlomo makes the prophetess part of the converts who died because they did not give in to the demands of 'her prophecy.' Although whilst on earth Nongqause and the believers who ran to the missionary for help were on opposite sides, Dhlomo merges them in their after-death life because of Nongqause's genuineness. Ironically she maintains her people's liberator status even where she had led them to their death in their earthly life. Dhlomo's Christian belief gets the better of him here, as he presents life after death in a way that is contrary to the ancestral after death existence. Nongqause maintains the link between ancestral worship and belief in God as presented by the missionary.

#### 4.2.1.5 Dhlomo's male voice

When Nongqause's girl companions are talking among themselves, Dhlomo's voice as a man comes out clearly, where a male stereotypical idea of women is heard through Nozizwe:

**Nozizwe:** Never mind Nongqause. We shall talk instead. We women love to talk and gossip. It keeps us away from trouble and from the madness that would surely result from our dull routine of single life. (Scene 1: 5).

As a woman within a patriarchal society where women continuously fulfil the male ideal of them, Nozizwe uses the negative label of women which attaches gossip to them. Her words, 'the madness that would surely result from our dull routine of single life,' implies that single women cannot have any exciting life. These words align with the belief that



women cannot live without men. Nolizwe's words; "women lead men to great, as well as beastly things," (Scene 1: 5) is an echo of Dhlomo's own voice, as a product of Mission school education. His religious influence is evident in these words, where the 'woman who leads man to beastly things' emulates the Biblical story of Adam and Eve. This reference to women labels them as bad people who are the source of destruction. Dhlomo's Christian influence is heard again in the words of Thandeka:

**Thandeka:** Why! Don't you see? He loves women, not a woman. He loves any and every woman, not a particular one...the promiscuous love of women makes a man despise devotion to one woman (Scene 1: 5).

Among the Nguni people of the Southern African region the concept of promiscuity does not exist as far as men are concerned because a man with multiple lovers is called *inganwa*, which means a man who has many lovers. *Inganwa* is a positive attribute, as opposed to *isishimane* or *sigwadzi*, which refers to a man who has no lover. Sometimes people use these terms negatively to refer to men who are against multiple lovers and strictly have only one lover. Dhlomo's use of 'promiscuous love' emanates from his religious background where having multiple lovers is discouraged.

Nongqause's girls talk about love and show signs of envying Nongqause for having many suitors. Nonsizi says "I wish I were in Nongqause's place: To love and live; to sway men!" (Scene 1: 5) Dhlomo represents the girls as vain people who think about love and men all the time. However, there is one character, Nolizwe, who is different from the rest in that she makes her own choices in life. She is aware that men in this society take women for granted, as they go from woman to woman abusing them in the name of love, and therefore refuses to be treated that way. Her admirer, Gxowa is, a handsome and brave fighter, qualities most women in this society would admire, but because of his insincerity in love matters, she decides not to return his affection. When Thandeka, another girl talks about the promiscuity of men, Nolizwe takes a firm stand and declares:

**Nolizwe:** You are right. That is why I do not care for my admirer, Gxowa, although he is handsome and is a brave fighter. He loves too many girls and cares for none. As soon as he has conquered a woman she ceases to attract and interest him - and I simply hate these girls who spoil him by running after him' (Scene 1: 5).

Perhaps directing her 'hatred' to the girls itself, shows lack of analytical thinking either on the part of the fictional 'girls' or the part of Dhlomo.

#### **4.2.1.6 Overall analysis of the play**

In *The girl who killed to save*, although Dhlomo has been radical in some of his representations of women, in others, he retains the stereotype such as in his representation of women as weak victims who cannot help themselves. In Nolizwe's character, Dhlomo attempts to present an empowered woman who can stand up for what she believes in regardless of everyone else. This is revealed by her determination not to be easily carried away by her admirer Gxowa. However, Nolizwe is still caught up within the same system that has girls like her locked in a hut as attendants of Nongqause, a girl who tells the people about a message she herself doubts. All these girls are deprived of a normal life. Probably, Dhlomo can only talk this much because he himself is caught up in the same situation of powerlessness. He may be aware of the oppression done to women, but as he is part of the society his voice is limited. A look at his other play, 'Cetshwayo' marks a change in the way he represents women yet it is written in the same year.

Dhlomo presents most of the men as weaker characters. Baba and Mlunguze quarrel over Nongqause because she is beautiful and superior to them. There are many other women whom they could pursue but they both compete for the exceptional person demonstrating their love for beauty and position rather than the individual. Credit is due Dhlomo for addressing this weakness among men although he is a man too. The two leadership figures, chief Kreli and Mhlakaza are also portrayed as men of weak character because they are manipulative.

#### **4.2.2 The play, *Cetshwayo*.**

Dhlomo wrote his play, *Cetshwayo* in 1936, the same year as *The girl who killed to save*. Whilst *The girl who killed to save* is set in Xhosaland, *Cetshwayo* is set in Zululand. It is a play based on historical events that occurred in Zululand during the reign of King Cetshwayo, from 1872 to 1879, when there were changes within the Zulu kingdom

because of the establishment of a white government. In the play King Cetshwayo has many wives, chief of whom is Nkosikazi, and a lover, Bafikile, who behaves in a different way from his wife. Bafikile feels free to say anything to the king if she thinks it is important. Dhlomo accentuates this dialogue drama with songs, dance, praise poetry, riddles and story-telling. In writing this play, Dhlomo attempts to implement his ideas about modern drama. Although the play is divided into fifteen scenes only five of them feature women. In the other ten scenes Dhlomo presents the historical events of King Cetshwayo's time, with one of those scenes featuring Harriette Colenso, the daughter of the commissioner. Dhlomo celebrates King Cetshwayo's achievements and gives him magnificence even at the point where the Zulu kingdom falls. I focus on Dhlomo's representation of women in the play.

#### **4.2.2.1 Peasant Woman**

From the opening scene of *Cetshwayo* there is a peasant woman breaking the soil with a hoe. Her baby is crying, but the woman is engrossed in tilling the soil. She has left the baby in the care of a young girl. Presumably, this woman is not working out of choice, but in order to survive. She has worked for a long time but it is only when the girl shows her the position of the shadow of the stick she uses to measure the time of day, that she realises she has to stop. Striving to survive has deprived this woman of enjoying the mother and baby bond that is expected to exist at this stage of their lives.

#### **4.2.2.2 Society placing importance in men from infancy**

The baby is a boy. The woman feels privileged to have a son and as she takes him from the girl she speaks to him, "Ah my big man! Peace, peace, my lord..." (Scene 1: 116). She addresses the baby as her 'big man' and her 'lord.' Mothers do not give this kind of reverence to their baby girls.

When a warrior comes by the fields where the peasant woman is working, the woman and the girl offer him water, for it is expected within this culture for a woman to take care of any stranger by offering them water or food. Society instils this practice through proverbial expressions such as *sisu sesihambi asingakanani*, *singangenso yenyoni* (the

stomach of a stranger is as small as a bird's kidney), which implies that a stranger can be satisfied with whatever small amount of food you give. This practice is an obligation, and society labels as 'bad' a woman who fails to provide something for strangers. The peasant woman accords the warrior this kind of care also on the grounds of his being a man. The peasant woman may serve as a representative of the women in this society who accept the position of insignificance, as they "have been socialised to silently accept" [their unfair treatment] (Hlanze and Mkhabela, 1998: 44).

The way the peasant woman overworks herself, the reverence she gives to her baby boy, and the way she treats the stranger reflect that she has come to a point of self-denial in life, giving preference to men. As she speaks to the warrior, it is clear that she regards herself and other women as inferior. Here Dhlomo deliberately uses this woman to depict the inferiority that women suffer. The way the peasant woman speaks of herself demonstrates the intensity of her inferiority complex. She proclaims her lowly status:

**Woman:** Well, we...who are we to speak and comment! We shall wait upon you, you higher ones. It is the great places, the great things and the great ones who count and grow. We, the lowly, remain, remaining (Scene 1: 119).

The stranger speaks to her in a way that reflects his respect for her, but she does not accept it. She embraces silence as she has been taught to believe that women ought to be silent. She is aware that the 'lowly people,' women, are never themselves in the first place, but is hopeless and lacks any attempt to improve the state of affairs. Her words imply that she and other women do not agree with everything that has been imposed on them, but, whatever their views, they keep them to themselves because they think this is how things are supposed to be.

#### **4.2.2.3 A new type of defiant woman**

As a 'New African,' Dhlomo exposes the issue of women who accept the subjection of women to silence. This is an important issue to a 'Tribal African,' who considers a woman's place is that of servitude. As a progressive, Dhlomo provides a possible innovation, through another type of a woman in the character of Bafikile. This woman is

aware of all the expectations of society, but she defies it, and follows her heart. Bafikile loves Cetshwayo and knows he loves her too. Unlike the woman who is resigned to subjugation, Bafikile is aware that change is vital. She does not regard 'remaining the same' as an option for her because she knows what she wants. She pursues it regardless of the likely uncomfortable consequences. She ponders about the love they have for each other with Cetshwayo and asks herself "Must custom stale love or love custom?" Here we can hear a distinct Shakespearean echo indicating Dhlomo's familiarity with Shakespeare's works.

Bafikile speaks. She makes her decision, and for her, "love stales custom" (Scene 3: 135). She is courageous enough to tell King Cetshwayo not to lead the Zulu people into a fight. She is more empowered than Nkosikazi, Cetshwayo's chief wife, who has accepted and proclaims her status of being just a woman "like all other women," (Scene 4: 141). Nkosikazi is Cetshwayo's chief wife because, she was "chosen by the counsellors" (Scene 4: 138). The king does not love her, as such, and she does not mind as long as society respects her position. When Cetshwayo orders one of his *izindunas* (ministers), Mnyamana, to escort Nkosikazi home, while he spends some time with Bafikile, Nkosikazi responds sycophantically. "Even so. Tarry a while O King. Who hath need for you?" (Scene 4: 142) Like the woman at the beginning of the play Nkosikazi has accepted her plight of being sent away by her husband so that he could be with another younger woman.

Contrary to the majority of women, Bafikile knows who she is and what she wants. She boldly tells Cetshwayo, "now is the time to show, who I am, and how much I care for you. Have a little drink" (Scene 15: 172). The patriarchal nature of this society affects Bafikile. Although she is assertive, the fact that she is part of this society limits her bravery. Similar to the peasant woman, Bafikile believes a woman's value is marked by her ability to be subservient to men. She measures her self-identity according to her ability to love and serve a man. It is vital for her to portray a high level of care for Cetshwayo. This indicates that the identity of women in this society, is measured by, and centred on, men. Here Dhlomo's message is not very clear. He attempts to advocate for

the emancipation of women, but his attempts are limited by the fact that he is a man within the same society that is oppressive. His strength as an emancipator is restricted by his historic context. He has traits of the mindset of this society that a woman's value and empowerment is in her ability to win a man's heart. Perhaps this is as indicative of Dhlomo's time in history as of any personal limitation in his understanding.

Bafikile's self-earned freedom to make choices is evident when Dunn, a European mercenary and a womaniser, approaches her. Dunn is known to have many wives given him by the king. To him, women are sexual objects, and he muses:

**Dunn:** ...Her curves cut deep into my soul. Her motions rock to my mouth my heart! I yearn. I choke! Desire infiltrates deep down my soul. See how her body with sweet ointment glows; which melts away my powers of resistance... (Scene 3: 136)

Bafikile perceives Dunn as simply reciting a praise song for women. This is actually a contradiction because instead of being praise for women it is a way of objectifying them. In this culture whenever a man sees a beautiful woman passing by, he starts saying such praises so as to draw the attention of the woman. In most instances these praises are not genuine, and any woman who takes them seriously does so out of folly or desperation. Dunn admits to weakness when compared with Bafikile. He cannot resist her beauty which is a sign of his powerlessness before her. He says her body 'melts away his power of resistance'. Dhlomo endows Bafikile with power that even makes a man like Dunn lose his reason.

**Dunn:** her glossy skin reflects her beauty pure, mirrors my dark desires, blinds me to Reason's call. All slippery, she! And my unbalanced Self towards her slides! O immoral landslide! Help! I fall into Destruction of Desire! (Scene 3: 136)

Bafikile responds like someone who has read Dunn's heart, because she secretly loathes him even though he greets her politely. She confidently tells him what she thinks about him. She has the confidence of a liberated person who fears no one and says what is authentic and from within her heart. She makes it very clear that she loathes his behaviour:

**Bafikile:** For you even to address me shames and humiliates me.

**Dunn:** ... Like you I bear a burden. Help me to carry it as lightly as you do yours. My burden is love.

**Bafikile:** Pig! Beast! I have heard of your depravities and wanton ways. Because the king has given you wives you think you can get wives...even the women you have were forced by custom and fear of death to live with you. A foolish dog given a bone tries to steal its master's most precious preserves (Scene 3: 136).

Dhlomo's addressing the issue of 'women forced by custom and fear of death' to live with men in arranged marriages is extremely powerful for a man, in his time, and even now and presents him as a gender sensitive man. Bafikile takes control of her life and refuses even to spend time listening to Dunn whom she hates. As she tries to go away, Dunn attempts to stop her by force. She throws down the bundle, and they wrestle fiercely until two warriors enter. Here Dhlomo touches on an issue that seems to be as relevant to contemporary South Africa as it was to his. This is rape. Some men interpret a woman's refusal to have any sexual relations with a man, as a disguised positive response and they force her. This is the excuse of many rapists. Bafikile refuses to let Dunn have his way with her. The arrival of the warriors is an advantage to her, but even if the warriors did not arrive at the scene she was going to fight and not allow Dunn to have his way with her.

#### **4.2.2.4 The new woman condemns aspects of culture: Arranged marriages**

Bafikile's direct confrontation of Dunn reveals a lot about the horrendous treatment of women by men, including father figures themselves, who treat them as objects. King Cetshwayo regards women as his property like livestock where he could take some for his own use and 'give' some to friends. He has his own "harem" (Scene 2: 122), and Dunn, as his friend enjoys receiving the many wives Cetshwayo gives him. It is clear that these women have not given their consent to this exchange. This treatment violates the

rights of women as human beings because each woman would prefer having her own husband, who she loves and who she would not share with any other woman<sup>99</sup>. Here, Dhlomo exposes the Nguni custom of treating women as men's property, whereby men take them as tokens of exchange from father to husband and not letting them live their own lives as they might wish. In this case, Cetshwayo, as king, assumes the role of the women's father and Dunn, the role of son-in-law.

Cetshwayo here is practicing *ukwendisa* (arranged marriage)<sup>100</sup> a custom in which the father chooses the husband for his daughter. Through Bafikile, Dhlomo makes it clear that he does not approve of all such customary practices. As indicated earlier on, Bafikile does not believe in following customs but follows her heart whenever the two are in conflict. She does what she thinks is best for her. Older women, like the peasant woman, interpret opinionated young women like Bafikile as bad, as she tells the girl child minder not to speak "*Thula!* (Be silent!) How wild you are!" (Scene 13: 167) Bafikile is aware how this society regards her assertiveness but she still expresses herself the way she believes she should.

This society associates women with weakness. However, Bafikile's conversation with Cetshwayo proves women make decisions that are sometimes even wiser than those of men. In their conversation she proves to be more thoughtful than the king. When Cetshwayo realises this he tells her she is getting herself into men's business, "Thou art raging mad. Man's business unsexes you. Be where you belong and all will be well" (Scene 4: 140). This implies that Bafikile's thoughtfulness is a sign of manly behaviour as expected in this society. Cetshwayo urges her to be where she belongs as a woman and particularly to stop thinking deeply. Dhlomo's use of 'unsexes' here, further indicates his familiarity with the works of Shakespeare, because these words resemble those said by Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*.

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<sup>99</sup> Many problems that listeners of the radio programme, *Khala mdumbadumbane sive tindzaba* write about reflect that women do not want to share their husbands (Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services: Sunday evenings).

<sup>100</sup> *Ukwendisa* is the Zulu word for an arranged marriage.



#### 4.2.3 Audience Response to Dhlomo's two plays

In *Cetshwayo*, Dhlomo presents readers and audiences with options and choices. The play has the potential to trigger responses. The audience cannot afford to be just passive spectators, but in the process of watching the play, may become actively involved with it and even identify with some of the characters. For instance, some women identify with Bafikile, because even though she is not a socially acclaimed person, she is almost the only fully liberated person in the play. Her liberation is not external, but authentic and stems from within herself, manifesting itself in the way she even talks to herself. Bafikile has transformed herself from the category of the "oppressed" to that of the "liberated". Those who see this character will know that it is possible for a woman to live life within an oppressive society and still place herself outside the confines designated by that same society. This way she is able to express a truer identity even though it may be contaminated by what society instils in people from infancy.

In *The girl who killed to save*, Dhlomo also triggers audience response in that, the audience may wonder why a beautiful girl who has a young man she loves, does not choose to elope with him after he makes all the necessary arrangements to do so. It raises the hope of the audience to see the old woman smuggle Mazwi into the sacred hut of Nongqause and they hear him telling her that he has arranged with the soldiers to let them get away. After hearing her pronounce her frustration, one may think that this is the chance Nongqause needs to be free from Mhlakaza and Kreli's manipulation. It is therefore with some disappointment that she remains in her sacred hut of bondage; Nongqause decides to "remain remaining," as the peasant woman in *Cetshwayo* puts it. Through Nongqause's decision to remain, the audience can also see themselves mirrored in that they are also caught up in some oppressive traditional practices which they find hard to escape. As they wonder at how Nongqause can let the opportunity of being free slip away that easily, they somehow see themselves doing the same. Nongqause's decision portrays the extent to which women have been oppressed to the extent of marginalising their innate ability to make authentic decisions in this society.

#### **4.2.4 Conclusion of Dhlomo's work**

In conclusion, Dhlomo was successful in addressing issues pertaining to women in his plays, although the plays still fall short of providing possible solutions to the problems facing women. To an extent this is because Dhlomo exercised his struggle against a system within which he himself lived. Although Dhlomo identifies the struggles that women had to fight, his other handicap is to provide possible solutions resulting from the time during which he wrote. At the time, active bodies that advocate for equal rights, human rights and the general fair treatment of women were not yet functioning as they are now. It is with the mindset of the twenty first century that we look at the plays set in the early twentieth century.

#### **4.3 Hilda Kuper and her play, *A Witch in My Heart***

In this section I consider Hilda Kuper's play, *A Witch in my heart*. I start with her background information and what made her to write the play. Next I discuss issues pertaining to women in the play and how Kuper addresses them. In my conclusion, I examine the relevance of the play in the development of women in Swaziland.

##### **4.3.1 Hilda Kuper's background information**

Hilda B. Kuper (nee Beemer) was born on August 23, 1911 in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, in what was then Rhodesia. She became an anthropologist and first went to Swaziland in 1934 for her fieldwork. During her fieldwork she met King Sobhuza and resided with the Queen Mother. She and the King maintained contact for forty years. This long contact with the Swazi king, led to King Sobhuza II appointing her as his official biographer in 1972.

In her anthropological study of the life of Swazi people, Kuper identified social issues which were not easily understood by those outside Swazi society. She also wrote a play in whose introductory note there is a long piece of writing which resembles her other anthropological texts. The play proves to be an illustration of the social issues in her anthropological texts but it occupies a secondary status to them.

#### 4.3.2 A synopsis of the play: *A Witch in My Heart*

*A Witch in my heart* is set in the 1930s mainly in Swaziland, but some scenes are set in Johannesburg, in South Africa. The play is divided into four acts. It is about a family of the Zwane clan, in which, the head, Ntamo Zwane and his wife NaboSikova<sup>101</sup> live with their only surviving son Sikova and his three wives, Senior LaHlophe<sup>102</sup>, Bigwapi and Junior LaHlophe.

The first act is divided into four scenes. In the first scene NaboSikova arrives home from the fields. She puts her hoe away and sits down on a mat next to Ntamo, her husband. Ntamo asks where the daughters-in-law are. She tells him that the two LaHlopes have gone to gather fire wood. Ntamo blames his wife for letting the younger LaHlophe go too when she might be carrying the grandson that could make them rejoice. He insists that Bigwapi, the childless wife, should have gone instead. He neither likes the way Bigwapi avoids the other wives, nor the way Sikova shows her special treatment although she is 'barren', as he puts it. He says Sikova's love for Bigwapi is not good for the family because it blinds him of her childlessness. He says the cattle given to Bigwapi's people were wasted.

As Ntamo and his wife are talking Induna, his personal assistant is heard saying the Zwane family praises. He enters followed by Bigwapi, her sister, Lomusa and two other girls who have brought beer with them. They place one bowl of beer in front of NaboSikova and Bigwapi leads the girls with the rest of the beer into the store hut. Bigwapi strains a little of the beer off the top then kneeling, drinks a little, before handing the bowl to her father-in-law. Ntamo and NaboSikova exchange greetings with the girls and ask how Bigwapi's family is. NaboSikova starts admiring Lomusa and points out that she has grown big. Bigwapi says her sister is still small. Ntamo orders Induna to kill a chicken in honour of the girls. They all thank him and Bigwapi and the girls leave.

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<sup>101</sup> Women in Swaziland are called by their first children's name with the prefix *Nabo-* which means 'mother of'. Therefore, NaboSikova, refers to Sikova's mother.

<sup>102</sup> Sometimes women in Swaziland are called by their surnames with the prefix *La-*.

After the girls have left Ntamo tells his wife that he thinks Lomusa has been sent to help cleanse her sister by bearing a child for her. Ntamo tells his wife to do his duty by talking to Sikova about taking Lomusa as an additional wife. When Sikova enters he looks at the bowl of beer. His parents offer him the beer and when he admires it, they tell him it is from his in-laws, Bigwapi's people. Both Ntamo and NaboSikova introduce to Sikova the idea of taking Lomusa as an additional wife. He rejects it and says the wives he has are enough for him. His father tells him that Sikova actually does not have three wives because a woman without a child is not a wife. Sikova stands up for Bigwapi saying she is a very good wife. Ntamo ends this conversation and sends Sikova to call his friend Jobeni.

Jobeni and Induna enter and after brief greetings Jobeni tells Ntamo the message from the new little office chief, a white man they call White-eyes. Soon after that Induna and Ntamo leave Jobeni and Sikova alone. Jobeni asks Sikova who the girls he has seen are. Sikova tells him they are from Bigwapi's people. Jobeni admires Lomusa's beauty and tells Sikova he envies him for his position of being a possible husband to Lomusa as custom permits. To this Sikova tells Jobeni that he is not interested, and says Jobeni could have Lomusa if he wants. Jobeni gets excited and Sikova is equally excited at the idea of Jobeni taking Lomusa because he feels the wives he has already are a bit too much for him. The scene ends with Sikova telling his friend Jobeni that in order for his family to be together he has to go and work in South Africa, "...a man should only leave his home because he must keep it whole" (Act I, Scene 1: 9). He wants to go and work in order to get money to heal his childless wife, Bigwapi who is not secure as a wife until she bears a child.

In the second scene the two LaHlophes are returning from gathering firewood. They notice that there are some people in Bigwapi's yard and NaboSikova is talking to them. The little wife says she is tired and her sister says it is because she is carrying more than wood. The two sisters start talking about their hopes that the coming baby will be a boy. They also talk about their fears. The little wife expresses her fear of Bigwapi whom she suspects of witchcraft, saying she saw in Bigwapi's pot a strange root associated with

witchcraft. Both accuse Bigwapi of an evil tongue and the Senior LaHlophe advises her younger sister to be very careful. The scene ends as the Hlophe sisters enter the homestead and Bigwapi talks to her younger sister, Lomusa.

Bigwapi tells her sister Lomusa about the hard life she lives because her husband loves her more than his other two wives. Lomusa tells her that back at home they think everything is going well for Bigwapi and asks why she does not tell them of her troubles. Bigwapi tells her sister that telling would not help. She re-lives the joy she felt as she tried to force tears when Sikova's people *teka-ed* her. Bigwapi tells her sister how much she longs for a child. As they are talking Sikova enters and squats. Sikova talks to his *umlamu*, Lomusa, and thanks her for the good beer they have brought. Sikova sends Lomusa to get him some beer to drink. When she returns he sends her to go and look for Jobeni.

After Lomusa has left, Sikova asks Bigwapi why her father has sent Lomusa. When Bigwapi seems not to know Sikova asks her if she would not like to have a child born by Lomusa. Bigwapi tells him that the arrangement would not help her, and tells him it might even make him love her less. To that, Sikova tells her that his love for her which he had the first time he saw her will never change. He then comforts her by telling her that he will go to work in the mines in Johannesburg so that he may get money for medicine men to heal her childless condition but Bigwapi does not want her husband to leave her to work in Johannesburg.

In the third scene Ntamo is talking with some other men and Sikova. They talk about cattle and the new tax laws imposed by the white men's government. Sikova tells his father that he will go to Johannesburg to work and earn money to support the family. Among the things he will use his money for, Sikova mentions paying medicine men, which implies Bigwapi's need for medicine men's attention. Ntamo sends Induna to call NaboSikova. Ntamo tells Sikova that when he returns from Johannesburg he will see about Lomusa. Sikova begs his father not to take Lomusa for him while he is away. He insists that he is going to Johannesburg to keep what he has, and not to add wives.

When NaboSikova hears of Sikova's plan she talks emotionally against the idea because it reminds her of her other son who died in the Johannesburg mines and whose body was not even recovered. Next, Ntamo sends NaboSikova to fetch Sikova's wives. After they have entered and sat down, Ntamo tells Sikova's wives that their husband is going to Johannesburg. They say nothing. The scene ends with Ntamo warning Sikova not to talk much about his journey to Johannesburg.

In the fourth scene Jobeni is wooing Lomusa, admiring her breasts and thighs which are obviously showing. When he attempts to touch her, she boldly stops him. As he further lavishes her with words of admiration and a plea to consider him in marriage she asks him what is his proof for his love. He tells her that he is going to Johannesburg where he has ten head of cattle hidden for her in the mine. As he makes that promise, Sikova enters and tells Jobeni that he has convinced his parents about his going to Johannesburg. He tells Lomusa to go to her sister, Bigwapi. Sikova reminds Jobeni that he leaves Lomusa for him. Sikova tells Jobeni that although his wives did not say anything they looked at Bigwapi as if to say that she was the cause of his going to Johannesburg.

Act II Scene 1, takes place outside a factory, in Johannesburg. A group of men are squatting on the pavement, playing a game with stones and talking about life in the city. One of them, Elias tells the others that although he lost his job he has a little job with Martha, a shebeen queen. As they talk they notice Sikova who is watching them from a distance. Ferdinand, a Swazi greets Sikova and on learning that he is also from Swaziland they quickly become friends. Sikova tells Ferdinand that he is married, has three wives, a daughter, Tekani and he tells him also of Junior LaHlophe's pregnancy. He passionately tells him about Bigwapi with whom he still hopes to have a child. The scene ends with Ferdinand promising to write a reference for Sikova in order for him to get a job.

Act II Scene 2, takes place back in the Zwane homestead. Bigwapi asks her sister, Lomusa why she is so silent although she was sent to ease her sister's sorrow. Lomusa tells Bigwapi that she was sent to Sikova as an *umlamu* not to Bigwapi but now that

Jobeni is going to Johannesburg, she will return home to their mother. Bigwapi promises that she will explain to Sikova's parents that Lomusa is only returning home because Sikova is away in Johannesburg. As they are talking NaboSikova enters and asks Bigwapi why she always stays indoors ever since Sikova went to Johannesburg. She tells her that Sikova's money has been helpful in preparations for the party for those who helped weed in the fields. Bigwapi tells NaboSikova that she does not sleep, but always dreams of Sikova. When Bigwapi rises to go, NaboSikova orders her to stay so that she may serve beer to the people who helped with weeding, as the young wife may be tired.

The two LaHlophes enter. Bigwapi asks the younger one why she is laughing and they exchange harsh words and quarrel. NaboSikova orders them to stop and the senior wife reprimands her sister for having no respect. Bigwapi goes to get a pot of beer. Soon after, the wedding party arrives. Everybody in the homestead rejoices. They drink and dance. Nabosikava serves her husband with beer. Jobeni and NaboSikova prove to be good dancers. As Jobeni dances the women shout his praises. Sikova's two sister-wives tell Jobeni to greet their husband when he gets to Johannesburg. Bigwapi gives Jobeni a beautiful stick, a present she has prepared for Sikova. The two sisters however do not like the idea of Bigwapi sending a special gift to their husband. NaboSikova tells them that a man wants more than sticks, implying that Sikova needed a child rather than artefact presents.

Act II Scene 3 is still in the Zwane homestead. There is a terrible storm and lightening flashes. Ntamo, his wife, Induna and Tekani are all together in a hut. Ntamo is concerned about Sikova's wives that are outside the homestead when there is such a terrible storm, especially as the younger wife is heavily pregnant. Soon the two LaHlophes arrive, and the younger one has begun her labour pains. NaboSikova hurries with the two LaHlophes to the birth hut. When Bigwapi wants to join them they tell her she is not welcome. Bigwapi pleads to join them because she will be left alone and is afraid of the lightening. Junior LaHlophe asks NaboSikova to send Bigwapi away. She eventually goes away wondering why a woman who is about to give birth to a baby would cry because of pain. She says real pain is the pain of not being able to have a child of your own. Inside the

birth hut NaboSikova shouts for joy as LaHlophe's baby is born. The baby is silent and they realise that the baby is dead. NaboSikova ends the scene with a lament.

Act III scene 1 takes place in a small shebeen<sup>103</sup> in Johannesburg where Martha is in charge. The men here sing and dance as they drink. Jobeni and Sikova meet and Sikova explains what he does for a job. He tells Jobeni about the things he has already bought for his mother and Jobeni tells him about his family back in Swaziland. Jobeni also gives him a special gift; a stick that his wife Bigwapi has given him. Sikova starts talking about Bigwapi in a trancelike manner. Ferdinand warns Sikova against loving a woman the way he loves Bigwapi. Jobeni assures Sikova that he is serious about marrying Bigwapi's sister, Lomusa. As they are talking, the postman delivers a letter to Sikova informing him of the death of his newly born son by his young wife, Junior LaHlophe. Sikova becomes distraught and laments his son's death. Whilst Sikova is distressed there is a police raid<sup>104</sup>. Everyone runs for cover except for Sikova who has no idea what is happening. The police arrest him.

Act III Scene 2 is in an open field outside a village. Ntamo, his brother, Helemu and Induna are waiting for Manchuman, the diviner. When Manchuman arrives the consultation begins. When he talks to them they say, "*Siyavuma!*" (We agree!) The response is louder if they think what he says is true, but if they think what he says is wrong their response is faint. The divination continues until Manchuman gives clues that suggest Bigwapi is the one who has killed Junior LaHlophe's baby. Ntamo and his party pay two goats for the divination.

Act III Scene 3 takes place in Ntamo's homestead. Ntamo, his wife and his brother, Helemu are deliberating about what to do with Bigwapi. They have a problem because they know what people would normally have done to witches in the past, but with the new laws of the white man which protect people, they could easily be jailed for punishing

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<sup>103</sup> A shebeen is a house in which a woman sells beer and other alcoholic drinks. Usually such drinking places are illegal. The woman in charge is called a Shebeen Queen.

<sup>104</sup> At the time during which the play is set, black people were prohibited from drinking their home brewed beer. Police regularly raided black people's settlements and anyone found drinking was sent to jail.



Bigwapi. NaboSikova suggests that they wait for Sikova before they do anything to Bigwapi. The men disagree and think whatever has to be done must be done swiftly. As they are talking Bigwapi brings in some beer to welcome them. She does this as part of her duty to serve her in-laws. Ntamo rejects her beer and he tells her to go back to her people because the diviner has identified her as a witch. Despite Bigwapi's pleas they send her off.

Act IV Scene 1 takes place in Martha's room in Johannesburg. Martha brags that the police will not trouble her because she has got them "oiled all right"<sup>105</sup> (Act IV, Scene 1: 57)). Sikova has come out of jail. His friend Jobeni gives him the stick from Bigwapi, which he lost the day he was jailed. Sikova's face lights up at the mention of Bigwapi's stick. He states that he needs to be cleansed of *sinyama* (bad luck)<sup>106</sup> he has got from the city. Jobeni tells Sikova that the city has no problem and that his problems are back at home. Jobeni tells Sikova that diviners think they know everything yet they too deceive people. He urges Sikova to wait so that they go home together and offers to help his friend, but Sikova refuses to wait or even to drink the beer he is offered.

Act IV Scene 2 is the last act of the play. It takes place in a village in Swaziland. Sikova has arrived home. The first question Sikova asks when he arrives home is about the whereabouts of his wives. When they tell him that Bigwapi is away following her being a witch, Sikova tells them he does not believe it. As Sikova is talking with his parents there is a hubbub outside where his three wives are shouting at each other. Bigwapi claims she had come to attend to her neglected garden and heard that her husband has returned. Ntamo becomes very cross with Bigwapi and raises his stick to strike her. Sikova grabs his father's arm to stop him from harming Bigwapi. A son is prohibited from doing this to his father, so Sikova sends himself to exile because he has crossed his social boundaries by raising his arm against his father. He tells all of them that he is going away to the city. Bigwapi pleads with him to take her with him. He refuses. Bigwapi asks her

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<sup>105</sup> To 'oil' or 'grease' people in authority is to bribe them.

<sup>106</sup> At the time of the play when someone had been to jail, Swazi people believed he had to have a cleansing ceremony to clean him of 'bad luck' which in Sikova's case manifested itself in his imprisonment and the death of his baby boy. Also, when a member of a family was buried whilst one of them was away, when he or she returned home they had to be cleansed of bad luck too.

mother-in-law to help her, but she in turn claims there is no help for Bigwapi. Finally, Bigwapi declares that the diviner was right; she is a witch in her heart. NaboSikova sums it up, and declares that is the case with every woman.

#### **4.3.3 Social issues in Kuper's play**

In her research as an anthropologist in Swaziland, Kuper found that the most striking aspect of the Swazi society was the subservient status of women. This aspect of Swazi life is highlighted in a number of customs which include *lobolo* and *kulamuta*, a man's right to claim his wife's younger sister or niece as an additional wife called *inhlanti* or *Umlamu*. Kuper learnt that these customs were part of society's expectation of women to be productive and re-productive. The more productive and re-productive a woman was, the more society labelled her 'good'. Due to the expectation of women to be productive and re-productive, the society was highly polygamous, which resulted in jealousy among the wives of a man as well as suspicion and accusation of witchcraft. Kuper also learnt that parents still had control over their adult married children so that parents of a man could even expel his wife if a diviner accused her of witchcraft.

##### **4.3.3.1 Names and rank of women within a homestead**

Kuper learnt that the identity of a woman in society is determined by factors such as her father's name and whether or not she has children and what gender they are. She is also identified by whether or not she works hard and whether or not she talks a lot. When a young woman gets married, her first name becomes used less than before. In most cases the name is completely not used. She becomes addressed by her surname with the prefix *La*..., such as *LaHlophe* for a woman from the Hlophe clan. In some cases within the same homestead there is more than one woman from the same clan, so the women are named according to their age or rank, such as *LaHlophe Lomkhulu* (Senior LaHlophe) or *LaHlophe Lomncane* (Junior LaHlophe). Also, when a woman has a child, she is named after her first-born's name or her first son's name such as NaboSikova (Sikova's mother).

Sikova's second wife is not called by her clan name. She is addressed by the name Bigwapi, which is a question meaning 'where can we report this one?' Bigwapi's name

carries a stigma as a person who does not belong anywhere. Although this is a name she got from her own people, and we know that even her sister Lomusa uses it, it is a sneering name. However it befits her status as a woman who rebelled against her parents when she was already promised to another man and decided to choose her own lover, Sikova. Her decision not to marry her parents' choice of a man made her not only a disgrace to her parents, but to be hated by her father in-law too. The Senior LaHlophe tells her younger sister about this as they gossip about Bigwapi:

**LaHlophe Snr:** Sister, I tremble. You know our father-in-law did not really want our husband to marry her. She was promised to another, and was about to go to him when she saw our husband at the King's festival. She stole him then with her love potions (Act I, Scene 2: 10).

As a result of their choosing each other in opposition to their parents, Sikova and Bigwapi invited a negative attitude from their parents. Bigwapi's situation is made worse by the fact that she is childless. Swazi society is very cruel to childless women. A woman's value in this society is greatly determined by childbearing capability. The more children a woman bears, the more she is respected especially if they are boys. A woman who has daughters is said to be childless. Society crudely states, *akatalanga* (she is childless)! A woman is expected to reproduce because her in-laws pay *lobola* for her.

#### **4.3.3.2 The status of women and *lobolo***

The main purpose of marriage in this society is for a woman to reproduce, so polygamy is popular because the more wives a man has, the more children it is anticipated he will have. The more children he has, the more productive he will be in his fields and general wealth. The number of children determines the increase in wealth because girls are expected to marry and bring cattle through *lobolo*. In her own parent's home, a woman's importance is determined by whether she is married or not, and also whether her husband has paid *lobolo* for her or not. This ideology is instilled in girls to a point where they also take it as an honour for a man to pay *lobolo* for them. This is pronounced by Lomusa when Jobeni woos her:

**Jobeni:** ...don't go to anyone else but me.  
**Lomusa :** Hau! Are you my husband already?

**Jobeni:** No, I cannot yet beat you – I can only beseech you.

**Lomusa:** With what do you beseech me? Words cannot be seen.

**Jobeni:** Wait and see. [laughing] I have ten head of cattle hidden for you in the mine (Act I, Scene 4: 22).

Lomusa's question to Jobeni; "with what do you beseech me?" signifies that her decision to accept him is determined by his ability to pay *lobolo* for her. Although their conversation is cut short by Sikova's arrival, it is clear that Lomusa has accepted Jobeni because of his promise to buy cattle with money he will earn from the mines. Although Jobeni is a talented young dancer whom people admire, both in Swaziland and Johannesburg, there is no evidence that Lomusa loves him apart from her asking what he has to offer for her. The fact that Jobeni and Lomusa are agreed to marry as soon as he returns from the mines in Johannesburg yet there is no evidence of Lomusa's love for Jobeni shows how the emphasis of society on *lobolo* for young women is damaging. Women like Lomusa have internalised this ideology to a point where their feelings do not really matter even to them.

#### 4.3.3.3 Love, status, and male children in a polygamous marriage

Whether a man and woman who are married love each other or not seems not to be considered in this polygamous society. This is demonstrated by the fact that Sikova's parents chose his first wife, Senior LaHlophe for him. Sikova did not contest his parents' choice. Although he accepted her, he also took another wife of his own choice, Bigwapi. When parents choose a wife for their son, they take into account the status of the woman's family in terms of wealth and respect. Love is not a factor as Sikova's father says when he tells his wife, NaboSikova that love is not one of the bases upon which a home is built:

**NaboSikova:** He loves her greatly.

**Ntamo:** Love! What thing is that with which to kill our home! Our home is empty...Is this love? A home is built by respect, and strength, and truth in self... (Act I, Scene 1: 3).

Although Sikova has three wives he loves only one of them, Bigwapi. Sikova discloses this to his friend, Jobeni when the latter states that he envies Sikova's polygamous status:

**Jobeni:** Is there a man who does not want to have two queens, each beautiful as the shining sun?

**Sikova:** There is only one sun, and I want no more wives (Act I, Scene 1: 8).

However, Sikova's special love for Bigwapi leads to her co-wives hating her. They suspect her of bewitching their husband so that he loves her more than them. There is gossip and friction among the wives. Sikova finds life miserable when he is with all his wives. He tells Jobeni about the strife in his household.

**Sikova:** Sometimes when I call my wives to speak with me, I find silence where there should be laughter. And sometimes when I am offered beer by one of them there is bitterness on the tongues of the others (Act I, Scene 1: 9).

Kuper shows the gossip and jealousy that prevails in Sikova's household as the two LaHlophes talk about Bigwapi whenever she is not in their vicinity. They suspect her of bewitching them in their gardens as well as stealing away their husband to herself by using *intsandvo* (love potion). Junior LaHlophe is even more suspicious of Bigwapi than is her older sister, who seems to be despondent and not caring about love any longer. The younger wife tells her sister what she thinks of Bigwapi:

**LaHlophe Jnr:** Has she not medicine to steal our food away and take it to herself? And I will tell you something else. Yesterday mother sent me to her hut to fetch a spoon, and I saw a pot in a corner. I peeped inside to see if there was something nice to eat, and in it there was a big root that looked like *gebeleweni*, [a kind of plant] which grows on precipices and is always green. I have been told that it is used to steal the hearts of men and make them weak so that they are overcome with desire when she appears who called their name when plucking it! (Act I, Scene 2: 10)

Similar to the two LaHlophes who gossip about Bigwapi whenever they are alone, when Bigwapi is with her sister, Lomusa, she in turn talks about their gossiping about her. She also regards the young LaHlophe as lazy:

**Bigwapi:** At first the big one welcomed me since I took over her duties as hand-maiden to the mother, but when she saw our husband's eye on me her heart disappeared in thoughts for herself; and from the beginning her little sister-wife has

looked at herself as a Queen - a Queen of the bees to whom we should all bring honey.

**Lomusa:** Is she lazy?

**Bigwapi:** Yes, she is lazy, and the truth is that we do not feel for each other (Act I, Scene 2:11).

Kuper's representation of Junior LaHlophe and Bigwapi shows how women in a polygamous marriage can be jealous of each other. Bigwapi married Sikova because she loved him, which placed her in an important position in his heart, which in turn frustrated the other wives especially the Junior LaHlophe because she came into the marriage expecting to be Sikova's favourite wife. She expected this because she came as his *umlamu*. She did not expect to compete with anyone for the attention of Sikova. She came to fulfil an important role that of being her sister's *inhlanti* (cleanser).

In this society a woman who does not have a son is sometimes regarded as childless. This makes women end up bearing many children as they try to get a son and earn status within their husband's home. Kuper presents the Senior LaHlophe as a woman who has only one daughter. Although by virtue of being Sikova's senior wife and her status is regarded as important, having no son places her in a doubly disadvantaged position of not being very productive by having only one child and also having no son. The Junior LaHlophe was sent by the Hlophe family to help her sister as an *inhlanti* to bear a son on behalf of her older sister. Kuper demonstrates the desperation for a son in this family through the way in which everyone in the family except Bigwapi is obsessed with Junior LaHlophe's pregnancy and has high hopes of her bearing a son. This obsession with the young wife's pregnancy is pronounced in the conversation of Sikova's parents from the very beginning of the play:

**Ntamo:** Where are the daughters-in-law now?

**NaboSikova:** The big LaHlophe went to gather wood and her little co-wife went with her.

**Ntamo:** The little wife went as well! You must be careful, mother of Sikova. There are too few children in our home...Sikova is our only living fruit, and his seed must be guarded well. The little wife might be carrying his son that will make us all rejoice... (Act I, Scene 1: 1).

When the two LaHlophes are alone, they talk about the pregnancy, and the possibility of it being a boy:

**LaHlophe Snr:** You are carrying more than wood.

**LaHlophe Jnr:** Indeed I am. It must be a boy. It already kicks so much. Do you think it is a boy?

**LaHlophe Snr:** Yes...

(Act II, Scene 2: 9).

Kuper's play shows how all the women can end up suffering in polygamous marriage. Here, they are all competing for Sikova's love, not necessarily because they love him, but just to ensure their position within the polygamous household and family. The Hlophe sisters even entered into the marriage without love in the first place. Bigwapi is the only one who entered into the marriage because of love. Apart from the stigma resulting from her earlier rebellion against her parents she is exceptionally industrious. Kuper also uses the character of Bigwapi to show what this society regards as qualities of a good wife.

#### 4.3.3.4 Qualities of a 'good' wife

Kuper uses the strong-minded Bigwapi, who refused to marry the man chosen for her by her parents to show what a 'good' wife should be like in this society. Bigwapi is very productive in the fields. She likes to work. She passionately puts her best effort into everything she does in the field, when brewing beer, as well as handicraft. Her mother-in-law, NaboSikova, confirms this aspect of Bigwapi's life:

**NaboSikova:** [*imperiously*] Stay here! It is not right that since your husband left you sit all the time alone on your hut. The inside of a hut is for sleeping, but you are not one who sleeps in the day (Act II, Scene 2).

Swazi people have a saying, *vilavoco, ulal'emini* (lazy bones, you sleep during the day), which they use to reprimand lazy people. When NaboSikova says Bigwapi is not one who sleeps during the day, she implies that Bigwapi is not lazy but on the contrary, she is diligent. She is the one who serves people with beer when weeding has been completed and there is a communal party. NaboSikova relies on Bigwapi to serve people. When

Ntamo and Helemu returned from the diviner, Bigwapi is the one who is swift to serve them with beer. She takes a sip first as is the practice, so that if the beer is poisoned the one serving it may get the poison first. Sadly, when Bigwapi tries to practice the servitude society expects of women to serve their in-laws, she is rejected because she has been identified by the diviner as the witch in the family. Meanwhile, in Johannesburg, Sikova concurs with his mother's words as he tells the people in Johannesburg about Bigwapi's diligence:

**Sikova:** She is diligent with her hands. Never have I tasted beer such as hers. She never left me without it and she can sew beads more beautifully than any other, with designs so skilful none can copy them. If she sees a thing but once, she will remember it and make hers better. The belts and necklaces she makes will never come undone; each bead so perfect in its place. Her thatching too, smooth as the outside of a clay pot, and when she plaits a mat it is more comfortable and fine than white man's cloth. In the dance, her shoulders move like the wind beneath still waters, and her hands are like reed fronds. And she is beautiful as the sun, and the unsoiled sand of the sea (Act III, Scene 1: 43-44).

Through Sikova's description of Bigwapi, Kuper portrays the qualities of a 'good' wife as this society labels women. She emphasises Bigwapi's excellence through the conversation she has with her younger sister, Lomusa:

**Bigwapi:** ....As you know, I like work; I like the earth and the things that grow in it, when I plant I feel that seed creating for me. All the work women do is my delight. I do not read a book, but from the earth I learn of many things. Had I a child I could teach him much (Act I, Scene 2: 12).

In the Swazi society chores are gendered, so a good woman is the one who does the chores set aside for women such as washing and cleaning. When Sikova gets to Johannesburg he still carries the Swazi mentality, yet there both men and women do chores that need doing regardless of their sex. When Jobeni asks Sikova what his job entails he responds in a way that reflects his gendered background upbringing:

**Jobeni:** What work have you?

**Sikova:** Oh! You would die laughing. Ferdinand took me in with his boss. I'm the woman in the shop. I sweep and dust, and scrub the floors, like this [*demonstrating with accompanying noises*] and even wear an apron... (Act III, Scene 1: 43).



Sikova regards his job as a laughing matter because in Swaziland he would not do a job like that under any circumstances. He even adds that he wears an apron (*sidziya*) which in Swaziland is associated with women.

Bigwapi, as Kuper's model of a good woman has one limitation, and that is beyond her control: her childlessness. As Bigwapi relates to her sister how much she delights in doing all the gendered roles set apart for women, she also mentions the one issue which brings misery in her life. She wishes she had a child; a son as she states, "I could teach him much" (Act I, Scene 2: 12). As Bigwapi has been talking about her delight in women's work, one would expect her to say "I could teach *her* much." The embedded longing for a male child exposes itself.

Bigwapi's difference from the other wives is outstanding and exposes their weaknesses. She brews good beer and offers it to her husband and the weeding party. Contrary to Bigwapi's love of preparing food and serving others, Junior LaHlophe peeps into Bigwapi's pot to see if there is anything "nice to eat" (Act I, Scene 2: 10).

As a means of catering for childless women, families get a woman's younger sister or niece to 'cleanse' their fate by bearing children on their behalf. Kuper exposes the limitation of this system. The strong-headed Bigwapi rejects this offer by telling Sikova, her husband and Lomusa, her sister, that she does not think such an offer would make her any happier:

**Bigwapi:** So that's it. You agree with your parents.

**Sikova:** I did not say I did. It is for you to speak. Would you be happy to have her with you? To have her child as yours?

**Bigwapi:** That would not help me. The others would not love me more on its account - (hesitating) and you?

**Sikova:** Yes?

**Bigwapi:** You might love me less... (Act I, Scene 2: 13-14).

Bigwapi's rejection of her sister's help in bearing a child does not lessen her own desire to have a child nonetheless; she detests the idea of having her sister take her husband. She

is also aware that although the child would be called her own, it would be biologically her sister's. Bigwapi does not pretend to appreciate her sister's 'help'. She advises Lomusa to return to their mother's home. Together they plot how to have her return home without revealing the truth to her-in-laws:

**Lomusa:** I was not sent to you, but to your husband....

**Bigwapi:** it would be easier for you away from me. I will tell them you wish to go until my husband returns, and they will agree. Remember, I will do all I can to help you... (Act II, Scene 2: 28).

Although Bigwapi has the attributes of a 'good' wife, her defiance of societal values such as refusing to enter into an arranged marriage when she was younger or rejecting the help of an *inhlanti* when married make her a 'misfit.' By creating this character, Kuper shows how difficult it is for sensible, sensitive, strong-minded women to resist customary practices. Kuper juxtaposes Bigwapi's character with the Senior LaHlophe, who is a 'good' wife according to her father-in law. Ntamo praises her to Sikova his son:

**Ntamo:** Do not criticize your big wife, my son. She is a woman who is right. She is quiet and full of respect, and like your mother, she does not start quarrels.

**Sikova:** Excuse me, father, but does not Bigwapi show respect?

**Ntamo:** I did not say otherwise. Before me she is always humble, but there is no person who can see into the heart of another... (Act I, Scene 1: 7).

Sikova argues that Bigwapi is equally respectful and his father does not deny it. A close examination and comparison of Senior LaHlophe's and Bigwapi's 'good' attributes shows where their difference lies. That difference is that the senior wife accepts all orders without question. When her parents and Sikova's parents agreed to their marriage she accepted and did not even consider love as a factor. Elders in this society appreciate this docility found in women like Senior LaHlophe and her sister. They disapprove of strong-headed, challenging women who stand firmly for what they believe and like, like Bigwapi. In this society it is important for even adult children to be submissive to their parents. Bigwapi defies the expectations of this culture by answering back to her father-in-law when they accuse her of witchcraft:

**Bigwapi:** What reasons, father, for this disgrace? What tongues have slandered me? I am no thing to be thrown back and forth.

**Ntamo:** Do not talk thus. Would I believe in evil that I did not see with my own eyes? Go. Oh, my ancestors, let me control myself and send her forth with bones unbroken.

**NabiSikova:** Girl, go quickly.

**Bigwapi:** [*Defiantly, but with dignity*] I will go, and I will stay at my own home until my husband's return. Then I will speak, and we shall see who has the truth and who lies.

**Ntamo:** You witch! Do... (Act III, Scene 3: 55).

Bigwapi speaks confidently because she knows she is innocent and she knows her husband loves her and will believe her against her accusers. She seems to miss one fact about this society; that parental control goes on as long as a man's parents live.

#### 4.3.3.5 Parental control over adult and married children

Every person remains a child as long as the parents are alive. Sometimes even when the parents are dead, every person remains a child in society because of the existence of *Labadzala* (elders). The *labadzala* concept serves as a watchdog that keeps every person controlled by the values of society. Sikova is a married man, but because his parents are still alive he remains a child and has to do as they command. When his parents suggest he takes Lomusa as an additional wife to help bear children on behalf of Bigwapi, he makes them aware that he does not want any more wives. When they insist on the idea, he begs them not to take Lomusa as his additional wife whilst he is away in Johannesburg.

Through Sikova's request to her parents, not to make Lomusa his wife whilst he is away, Kuper reveals that in this society a man's parents can take a wife for their son even whilst he is away. A man's parents are more significant than the man in a marriage! Before going to Johannesburg Sikova tries to tell his parents that he is old enough to make his own decisions, but his parents have a different view:

**Sikova:** Mother, it is necessary. I am old now and must look after myself.

**NaboSikova:** To me you are still small. As long as your father lives you are still small and in his armpit.

**Ntamo:** Remember that, my son. Do not go the ways of the white people whose children make themselves bigger than their parents. We know the right laws. Mother of Sikova, fetch the wives (Act I, Scene 3: 19).

Sikova's father is the one who even tells his son's wives about his going to Johannesburg. The primary significance of a man's parents over his wives is reflected after Sikova has earned some money and he buys things to send home. Although he is a married man with three wives and a daughter, he buys for his mother first, and he tells his friend that later he will buy for his wives too:

**Jobeni:** ...Tell me, have you sent much money home?

**Sikova:** Of course. Two Pounds. And I have bought blankets for my mother, and will buy some for my wives here too. Things are cheaper here than in the stores at home (Act III, Scene 1: 43).

Judging from the way Sikova talks about his wife Bigwapi, one would expect him to buy something for her before anyone else, but he does not. During socialisation it is instilled into young men that their mothers are the priority and preside over their wives. The importance parents have over a man's wife or wives is demonstrated after the family has returned from Manchuman, the diviner. To prove precedence over every matter in his son's household, Ntamo expels Bigwapi from the homestead after she has been identified as the witch in the family. He does not wait for his son's return. When Sikova returns and finds that his favourite wife has been accused of witchcraft and expelled from the homestead, he fails to protect her even when she cries for help:

**Bigwapi:** Speak for me my husband. Where will I go? Do not abandon me. Do not turn away your eyes. Oh! You shall suffer as you make me suffer now.

**LaHlophe Snr:** Hear she curses. Her words have the power of evil.

**Ntamo:** Do you think that a son of mine would cast me off for you? Would choose you above his parents? You, an empty nothing. Above his goodly wives? Is it not clear that we were right – that she is poison? I will strike you to the ground! (He raises his stick.)

**Sikova:** Father, stop! Do not strike her! (Grabs Ntamo's arm)

**Ntamo:** Sikova: Do not interfere with me!

**NaboSokava:** My son, hold yourself.

**Sikova:** (Shocked at his unfilial behaviour) Go Bigwapi! Through you I raised my hand against my father. Never can I take you back. There is too much sorrow all around. But I, too, cannot now remain. I will cleanse myself of that which has been, and return to the city (Act IV, Scene 2: 66)

Sikova loves his wife, Bigwapi, but the values of this society ensure his loyalty to his father. He raises his hand to protect Bigwapi, which instantly puts him in the position of standing against his father. The dilemma that Sikova faces here is the dilemma facing many Swazi men who love their wives and would love to express their love, but find it hard to do so because of contradictory pressure from society. In the end, Sikova goes into exile of his own accord, showing that the values of society intended to empower family life are actually the enemy that destroys it. Ntamo fails to listen to Sikova's plea and he loses his son, and Sikova loses his home, his daughter, and his three wives, including the only woman he loves. The women lose their husband and the status that goes with being married. This play exposes the cruelty that prevails in Swazi society and shows that people need to re-evaluate their way of life. The cruelty this society has towards women means that they are treated as strangers in their own homes.

#### 4.3.3.6 Women as strangers

The play ends with Bigwapi not being accepted by anyone. Although Kuper does not show us what happens beyond the end it remains clear that even in her own family no one will welcome Bigwapi. This is evident in the negative labels that sneer at women such as *mabuy'ekwendzeni* (the one who returned from marriage); *sehluleki* (a failure); *secamabhodo* (the one who jumps over pots) and a lot more names that make women strangers, belonging nowhere. This seems to be the plight of most Swazi married women. This situation changes when women grow older and their children get married. NaboSikova discloses this aspect of internalised oppression when she joins in a conversation between her husband, Ntamo and his brother Helemu:

**Helemu:** A daughter-in-law is always an outsider, my brother, and can soon become an enemy. She is not of us. She enters marriage with tears, and never can forget that her own ancestors are at her parents' home and that here she keeps their name separate from our own.

**NaboSikova:** (bitterly), it is true, brother-in-law. We women never forget that at our husband's home we are the strangers, and only when we are old, so old that blood no longer runs in our bodies are we accepted there. Then we control the young wives of our sons, and watch them suffer too, as we young wives suffered.  
(Act III, Scene 3: 53).

NaboSikova agrees with the men yet she knows well that this kind of treatment of women is not right. She has been raised within this society and this vile practice has become unconsciously embedded within her.

#### 4.3.4 Conclusion

By exposing the issues that bind Swazi women Kuper has contributed to the development of women. Her work also exposes the side that is rarely examined, the frustration that men experience when there is a contradiction between their personal convictions and societal values, as represented in Sikova's case. He loves his wife, Bigwapi, but loses her and the rest of his entire family because he is not free to choose.

In this play Kuper represents Swazi women as facing problems that stem from the values of society. She demonstrates how women struggle within a society that has laws which do not give priority to the interests of women. The instances when women are made to feel valuable are when they comply with the expectations of society. Ironically, such instances are when the interests of women are trodden down, such as when a young woman feels important because she has to be her sister's or her aunt's *inhlanti*. A girl who is sent to be *inhlanti* forfeits her own right to choose a man she loves, but because of internalised oppression the pressure to be submissive to her family supersedes the one of making a personal choice. Kuper portrays this aspect of society in the characters of the two LaHlophes. The older one has accepted everything that is given her without any question even where her interests are at jeopardy. She believes in maintaining silence as society expects of women. She corrects her younger sister who likes to talk about Bigwapi at every possible opportunity they get alone

Kuper understands that some Swazi women do not accept the oppression that society imposes on them, but are brave enough to go against the majority and fight for their rights. Kuper demonstrates through the character of Bigwapi that strong women struggle regardless of all the labels that society gives them. It is apparent however, that although such women fight hard, their struggle is limited by the fact that they are always within the same society that oppresses them. They are a product of the oppressive society so to a

certain extent they have internalised the ideology that the society holds about women. This is exemplified in Bigwapi's yearning for a son instead of just a child. The value of male children is inherent in women without their conscious realisation. It is also not very clear why Bigwapi is so diligent. This society over-emphasises the importance of diligence among women, so Bigwapi strives to excel wherever possible. The requirement of a good woman which she does not possess is the one beyond her own control; that of bearing children. As a product of this society, she regards her childlessness condition as a limitation on her part.

Kuper demonstrates how some practices divide women against their own will, such as the competition that prevails among co-wives. Among women there might be a bond but this does not develop because of the external societal pressures. When the time for Junior LaHlophe to give birth to her baby comes, Bigwapi stands outside the hut and wants to genuinely help. As there is storm she is also scared of being alone, but the two sisters and their mother-in-law refuse her access into the hut. Junior LaHlophe goes to see if there is anything nice to eat in Bigwapi's pot, because she knows Bigwapi is a good cook, but the dividing force that exists among co-wives makes her suspect Bigwapi of being a witch that has a root to steal hearts of men.

When Bigwapi has been sent away, none of her co-wives sympathise with her. None of them even imagines that there is a possibility of her being innocent. They strongly believe Bigwapi has bewitched Junior LaHlophe's baby. In most cases when there is a struggle between the forces within the women, the negative forces override the positive because the negative ones have support from society. When Bigwapi is away, the two Hlophe sisters do not even weed her garden.

Society's insensitiveness is portrayed even at the end of the play when Ntamo maintains his word although he sees his family obliterated. As Bigwapi cries out for sympathy NaboSikova is the one who pronounces the truth. She knows that Bigwapi does not have any witchcraft, but because of the cruelty of society to women someone has to bear the

accusation, and it is the already disadvantaged childless woman. She responds to Bigwapi with the sad words:

**Bigwapi:** (Last appeal) Mother, pity me, I swear, by my father I used no witchcraft. Can you not help me?

**Nabosikova:** My child, I pity you, but for you there is no help.

**Bigwapi:** (Passionately) The diviner was right. I am a witch! In my heart.

*[Bigwapi goes off leaving Nabosikova alone on the stage as it gradually darkens.]*

**Nabosikova:** My child, such is the case with every woman! (Act IV, Scene 2: 68).

Hilda Kuper wrote this play at a time when Theatre-for-Development was not yet in practice. Superficially the play may appear to have no bearing on Theatre-for-Development as a practice, but I find it quite relevant in this study because it is a contribution to the development of women. Development occurs in stages. Before a group of people may engage in any activity that aims to promote their development they need to be aware that there is need for development. Secondly, they need to identify the areas in their lives where their development needs to be orchestrated the most. As I have argued above, sometimes it is difficult to even identify what needs developing if a group of oppressed people are within the same community with their oppressors. Again, as stated above, in a society such as Swaziland there exists a strong form of internalised oppression which makes it very difficult for the women to identify the dividing lines between the oppressive forces and the genuine innate values people hold. That is also a controversy, because even the innate values are to a large extent determined by the socialisation that exists. Therefore Kuper's play deals with this problem.

Kuper's play has had the advantage of being studied in schools as a key drama text. Although the classroom situation is not a workshop, as the learners analyse issues addressed in the play a lot is unravelled. School students have performed the play before numerous audiences that include whole communities. Whenever this happens, women get an opportunity to see their own lives reflected. It becomes possible for them to critique their own behaviour and value system. The play enables Swazi communities to realise that there exists among their society some injustices that need to be addressed. It serves as a launching board for activities which not only expose injustice but could be used to implement the desired change within the Swazi society. The play dates back a number of



decades but it is still relevant in the development of women because Swaziland still practices some of the oppressive values found in the play. The scale is not the same as it used to be because women have been struggling to address the wrongs society does to them, and also because the women have also moved to a point where women like Bigwapi are no longer solitary figures. There are numerous organizations that support the emancipation of women.

#### **4.4 Zodwa Motsa and her literary works**

In this section I consider Zodwa Motsa's play *The Paper Bride* I discuss Motsa as a playwright, including the forces that influence her, her representation of women in her play and the issues that her play addresses. I conclude with an examination of the relevance of her play to the development of women in Swaziland.

##### **4.4.1 The background of the playwright, Zodwa Motsa**

Zodwa Motsa is a playwright, poet, actress, singer, academic, wife and mother. She was born in Mankayane, a semi-rural part of Swaziland, where people still value the long established cultural practices. Motsa declares it was at home, that she got her inspiration:

My inspiration to "tell the tale" was initiated around the fire-place where both my mother and my grandma particularly told us *tinganekwane* (folk-tales) and then insisted that we told the tale back to one another in return<sup>107</sup>.

To further accentuate their influence on her work, Motsa, specifically thanks her grandmother in the dedication to her collection of plays, *Of Heroes and Men*,

Finally, to you, Grandmother, Zintombi - the fifteen years I spent with you were a more priceless cultural training than any conventional university could ever give (Zodwa Motsa, *Of Heroes and Men* 1991:1).

Motsa is also one of the few Swazi women who have made their mark in the academic sphere, and she is Professor of English at The University of South Africa (UNISA). She states that it was at home that she got her love for reading. When she could read a little,

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<sup>107</sup> A personal interview in Pretoria in 2005.

she read all her older siblings' school books in Zulu. English was a major challenge to her because neither of her parents spoke it; the only European language they knew was Afrikaans, which her father tried to teach her with very little success.

Motsa's work is evidence of three of the sources of influence: Zulu, Christianity and English. Motsa's work also shows the influence of her mother and grandmother, two strong-willed characters. Those two women, especially her grandmother, were exceptions to the patriarchal expectations of Swazi culture when it came to bringing up children with gender distinctions. Motsa reflects:

We all tilled the field, took the livestock to the dip and the grazing field without gender distinction. Can you believe that I can milk a cow? There was neither boy nor girl in my family – not with my grandmother and her walking stick around (ibid).

As I explore Motsa's work, I do so considering that writers do not exist in isolation. They live within communities, and they tend to write their own lives and their communities. Steven Moyo, from Zimbabwe, referring to the Ndebele community asks the question, "Why do writers write?" (Moyo, Steven, "The Nebulous Dimension: An approach to oral poetry" in Moyo, Steven P.C., Sumaili, Tobias W.C. and Moody, James A. (eds.) (1986) *Oral Traditions in Southern Africa: Volume II Aesthetics, Language and Literature* 1986: 133) In an attempt to answer the question, he identifies reasons which include the following:

- (1) Writers write to escape from the undesirable conditions of their daily working lives as teachers, janitors, housewives, doctors, etc.
- (2) Writers write to exercise an influence on their societies.
- (3) Writers write for the purpose of self-glorification (Moyo 1986: 134)

Motsa may have written to escape her daily life, or even to glorify herself, but the main motive I identify in her work is that she writes to exercise an influence on her society. This is in accordance with Susheila Nasta's observation that a post-colonial woman does more than voice her concerns, and subverts the male writings about women to create her own new traditions:

[The] post-colonial woman writer is not only involved in making herself heard, in changing the architecture of male-centred ideologies and languages, or in discovering new forms and language to express her experience, she has also to **subvert** and **demythologise** indigenous male writings and traditions which seek to label her (Nasta Susheila, *Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia*, 1991: xv)

Motsa fits the position of a post-colonial writer, and her play demonstrates Nasta's point. Amanda, the protagonist in Motsa's play, *The Paper Bride* has similar attributes to Motsa herself, a Swazi woman, married and in full time employment. She is not writing about herself as there are numerous differences between them, but the play serves as a voice for the post-colonial woman in Swaziland.

#### 4.4.2 A synopsis of *The Paper Bride*

*The Paper Bride* was written in 1991. It was published in Pietermaritzburg, in South Africa before being acted on stage anywhere. It is set in Manzini, the central city of Swaziland. It is a one act play with five scenes, and has only four characters. The first of the characters is Samuel, a young man in his late twenties, and is a school teacher. His wife, Amanda is about twenty-five and works in a bank. The third character is Samuel's mother. The last one is Gugu, who is the same age as Amanda and she is married to Samuel's cousin. The first, fourth and fifth scenes occupy a day each; and scene two and scene three cover one day, day two.

Amanda and Samuel have been married for less than a year. They live and work in the Manzini city. Amanda works in a bank and Samuel is a teacher. The play is set in the couple's house in the city<sup>108</sup>. Most of the action takes place in the living room. The first scene happens after work and has no dialogue. Samuel is reclining on the sofa, reading newspapers and throws them down as he finishes reading.

On the floor close to where he is sitting there is a rather untidy pile of exercise books which he has obviously been working on...He takes off his shoes, dropping them

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<sup>108</sup> Within the Swazi society it is normal for people to own two homes; a house in the city and another one in the countryside where a man was born, and where his parents live if they are still alive.

carelessly on the heap of newspapers lying on the floor. He rummages through the pile and comes up with the page he is looking for" (Scene 1: 40).

Amanda tidies up silently after Samuel's mess. She serves Samuel with tea and biscuits. In addition to the papers Samuel throws down his socks and shirt. After eating he sleeps there on the sofa. Amanda angrily leaves the living room to go and sleep.

The second scene is on the second day and Amanda comes home from work later than Samuel. She is very tired. She finds him reading his newspaper. When she gets a drink for herself he asks her to go and get some for him too. Amanda tells him she is tired, and asks him to get his own drink. Samuel says even the ancestors can blame him for preparing his own food when his wife is there<sup>109</sup>. Amanda senses there is a problem that they need to address in order for their marriage to work better. Unlike his wife, Samuel thinks there is no problem. When Amanda realises that Samuel does not take her seriously, she threatens to leave him. Frustrated by his ignoring her, she becomes determined to show him another aspect of her which he is not aware of and speaks to herself:

**Amanda:** ...Sam thinks he's so smart! I'll teach him a thing or two! He doesn't know the real me. [*She marches across the kitchen door and exits, her receding back stiff with indignation*] (Scene 2: 44).

The third scene occurs later in the evening of the same day. Amanda leaves their bedroom to sleep in the living room. She tells Samuel that all services are suspended until he is ready to have them discuss their house matters in a sort of meeting setting. Samuel thinks it is inappropriate for Amanda, as a woman to call a 'meeting'. Samuel does not take her seriously, and thinks she is only joking. When she insists Samuel reminds her that his family paid *lobolo* for her, so she has to perform all her duties as a wife. Amanda pronounces that although she appeared to be happy on the day they paid her *lobolo*, she was actually not because she had no opinion on the whole matter. She tells Samuel that no Swazi girl cannot show feelings of happiness when her family is proud of her for bringing in *lobolo*. Samuel starts praising Amanda and talks her into going back to sleep

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<sup>109</sup> It is common practice for Swazi people to refer to the ancestors as people who can come and make judgement on how the people relate to one another. This is done mainly to correct any one behaving in a way that was unacceptable in the past.

in their bedroom. As they are talking there is a knock at the door. It is Gugu, Samuel's cousin's wife. She is sent by Samuel's mother to tell them that she will pay them a visit. Gugu starts commenting about Amanda's delay in falling pregnant. Neither Samuel nor Amanda like Gugu's attitude and she soon leaves them when Samuel attempts to hit her following the humiliating manner in which she talks to Amanda. As Gugu leaves, she threatens to tell Samuel's mother about the incident.

The fourth scene takes place in the late afternoon of the third day. Amanda is hurriedly tidying the living room before leaving. She writes a note for Samuel who is not yet home where she says that they have an intimate and personal problem. Samuel's mother arrives before Amanda leaves the house. Samuel's mother wastes no time in complaining about a number of things to Amanda including the quietness of their house. She complains that the absence of children is a problem. She tells Amanda that her younger sister had recently visited and sent her greetings. She also suggests Amanda goes to traditional healers for help. As they are talking, Samuel arrives drunk and staggering. Amanda asks Samuel where he has been, and both Samuel and his mother blame her for asking, saying a woman should not ask where a man has been. Amanda tells them that if they support each other against her, she knows what to do. She leaves, and slams the door behind her.

After Amanda has left, Samuel's mother tells Samuel that they need to see Majokozela, a traditional healer who can help them with their problem. There is a misunderstanding between Samuel and his mother. Samuel thinks that his mother suggests they go to the traditional healer because of the same reason Amanda's note has referred to as intimate and personal. He assumes that his mother and Amanda regard him as inadequate sexually. He feels very humiliated. His mother hints to him that he needs to consider taking Amanda's sister Thandi as a wife too to help them solve their problem. It takes a while for Samuel to understand that his mother believes Amanda cannot bear children. He objects to the idea of taking Thandi as a wife and tells his mother that that she does not understand their lifestyle. He tells her that Amanda is not 'barren'. The scene ends with Samuel's mother really disappointed by her son who does not accept her suggestions.

The last scene occurs in the same place as the previous one, in the mid-morning. As usual Amanda is tidying up, and getting clothes ready. Samuel is polishing his shoes. Amanda wants to know from Samuel if he knows why his mother has come. He is not keen on discussing it. Amanda threatens to leave Samuel, but this time Samuel says he has had enough of the threats. Eventually they discuss their problem. They realise that there has been a misunderstanding between the two of them concerning having children and what Amanda means by “Intramarital *inactivity*” (Scene 5: 58). Amanda tells Samuel that she finds it problematic for them to go together to work in the morning and yet she is the only one who does the entire housework when they come in tired in the afternoon. As Amanda lists the things Samuel does to overburden her, he starts correcting his mistakes. They resolve the problem by agreeing to share the housework and all their responsibilities. The play ends with the couple holding hands like teenagers as they run into their bedroom. Samuel’s mother is left sitting alone on the sofa disappointed, looking out of place and forgotten.

#### **4.4.3 Issues arising from the play**

In this play, Motsa addresses problems which modern couples face. Her play suggests that the dogmatic negative attitude of men towards women is a legacy from the past costing both men and women the life they desire to live. The play reveals also that, together, through dialogue, both men and women can discard the undesirable elements from the past and create something new that will work well for them. Motsa, articulates her own view through a rhetorical question in the author’s note on the play:

Are the chauvinistic attitudes often found in modern African men an inescapable legacy of the past, or are they a convenient cover for individual shortcomings which could be overcome if acknowledged (Motsa 1991: 38)?

Like Kuper’s play, this play addresses a wide range of issues including the double burden of women in full time employment; women over-working themselves to be acceptable in the highly demanding patriarchal world; *lobolo* and *kutekwa* as instruments that orchestrate a woman’s marriage not only to her husband, but to his whole family; the

control which in-laws have over a married woman; women and the procreation of children; *inhlanti* to assist a childless woman; girlfriends, men and unfaithfulness in Swazi society; men's impotence and virility in marriage; younger girls as instruments to 'rekindle the fire' in men; mothers-in-law as the voice of society, and communication and resolution of problems in marriage through dialogue.

#### **4.4.3.1 Double burden for women who are in full time employment**

Amanda and Samuel are a modern couple who live in the city. Both work to cope with the expensive city life and also to support Samuel's family. Although they were married in a Civil Rites type of marriage, Samuel's family paid *lobola* for Amanda, an essential aspect of the Customary Rites marriage. Combining features of the Customary Rites and Civil Rites marriages is common practice in Swaziland.

In Swaziland when a woman gets married, her 'mothers'<sup>110</sup> and aunts sternly tell her, her duties in her married life. Most of these expectations are a legacy from the past when women stayed at home and did housework, and do not take into consideration women in full time employment, as is the case nowadays. This creates conflict in many marriages. On the other hand the main message that men give a man about to be married is that once married he has to earn respect in society by providing for his household. Unlike women, men do not have any specific duties listed for the man about to marry.

In this play, Motsa makes Amanda a representative of married women who face the conflict between being in full-time employment and the expectations of Swazi culture. During the day, women do work equal to men, but in the evenings they must also do the housework that, according to Swazi culture, is specifically set aside for women. In the evenings then, as women labour around the house, men read newspapers or watch television. Like all such women, Amanda works full time and when she gets home she cooks and cleans up the mess her husband makes as he leaves his clothes, newspapers and dirty dishes around the house.

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<sup>110</sup> In Swaziland an individual has more than a biological mother. All her mother's sisters and the wives of his father's brothers are her 'mothers'. 'Aunts' are her father's sisters.

In the first scene, when Amanda comes into the living room with a tea tray, she finds no space for it because of the mess Samuel has made. She clears it away before putting down the tray for him. Samuel makes no gesture of gratitude and drinks his tea without even looking up from the newspaper he is reading. He perceives it as his right as a man to be served by his wife, and therefore sees no need to thank her. Motsa's play demonstrates how this behaviour easily goes on unchallenged:

Amanda comes with a novel in hand, ready to relax too, but seeing the state of the room, she puts down the novel, picks up the shirt, folds it neatly and puts it next to Samuel. She begins gathering up the pile of newspaper. Before she has finished, Sam absent-mindedly takes off his socks and throws them down. He starts making a fresh pile of newspapers as he goes on reading. He finishes his tea, then pushes away the tray and takes a nap. Amanda removes the paper, shirt, socks, shoes and tray from the living-room. She comes back to collect her novel and storms out again, obviously annoyed, leaving Sam sleeping (Scene 1: 40).

For many women this is the life they experience daily and tolerate without complaint because they have internalised that their servitude is the norm. Amanda sacrifices her own leisure time, because of Samuel's thoughtless behaviour thus spoiling what was supposed to be a pleasant evening for a young couple still in the first year of marriage. Although Amanda storms out of the room, annoyed, she does not say anything to challenge Samuel's behaviour. Women live from day to day without complaining when they are unfairly treated.

At this level of the play Motsa seems to be following in the steps of anthropologist Hilda Kuper who represents Swazi women as helpless people who can do nothing to alter their circumstances. The women realise that some things need to be addressed, but they do not say anything because of the fear of being labelled as bad women who like complaining. The women are torn between meeting the expectations of the patriarchal society and meeting their own needs. In most cases society wins. Most women comply with the *tibi tendlu* orthodoxy and remain silent. At this point Motsa seems to be only *exposing* the plight of Swazi women in full time employment. Although exposing problems is of course a step towards challenging them because it means breaking the silence, it is not enough. Something needs to be *done*.



The first scene has no dialogue and Motsa does this deliberately, to portray what happens in some homes where the husband and wife are in the same house, carrying on with their businesses without uttering a single word to each other. There is no communication, yet, the situation is one that requires the couple to talk to each other. Motsa's description of the scenario shows that Amanda is not happy at all, but nevertheless continues doing what is required of her. When Amanda enters to serve her husband with tea "she stops short, looks at the mess and tries to work out where to put the tray..." (Scene1: 40). Later Amanda comes in with a novel in her hand, ready to relax too but seeing the state of the room, she puts it down, picks up the shirt..." (ibid) At the end of the scene Amanda storms out of the room, which shows she is angry, but still she is silent about her husband's inconsiderate behaviour shows. It is only in the second scene that Amanda challenges the situation. Motsa's scenario symbolises the situation where Swazi women have been tolerant of all the patriarchal pressures that society exerts on them, but have now realised that they have to take the initiative and deal with their problems.

#### **4.4.3.2 Taking the initiative to break the silence**

In the second scene Motsa answers some of the questions that arise in the first scene. Samuel is sitting on the sofa reading his paper and whistling light-heartedly. Amanda enters in her working clothes and "drops her hand bag on the sofa beside Samuel and sits next to it" (Scene 2: 41). Exhausted after a hard day's work, she takes off her shoes and sighs, "Ooh! What a day!" Standing the whole day, her feet are tired and aching. As a bank teller, she has long working hours but short breaks, yet she is required to wear high-heeled shoes. Like many other professional women, Amanda has other responsibilities after work even before she gets home.

When Amanda comes in, Samuel continues reading his paper and whistling. Only after Amanda sighs and flops onto the sofa does Samuel ask her if she had a good day. However, even as he asks her his eyes are still on his newspaper. Amanda responds in a manner that shows she is very tired, but Samuel does not pay any attention to that:

**Amanda:** *[not looking at Sam, she takes off her shoes]* Ooh! What a day!

**Sam:** *[eyes glued to the paper]* had a good day at work, dear?

**Amanda:** *[flatly]* same as usual. *[She yawns]*

**Sam:** *[paying very little attention to her]* Mhm! Wha-a-at? Wanderers are challenging Swallows again! Are they serious? *[Silence. Amanda gets up, goes to the kitchen and comes back with a glass of Coke. She sits down to drink it. Sam looks up.]*

**Sam:** Any for me? (Scene 2: 41)

Amanda responds to Samuel 'flatly'. This is indicative of her state of mind. She is tired, she yawns. She is thirsty, hungry and overworked. Samuel is too obsessed with the sports article he is reading in the newspaper. Although Samuel asks Amanda about her day in a way that seems to lack genuine caring, it is a step towards the right direction on Samuel's part, because some men do not even do this much. The silence that follows his comment about the two football teams marks the period of Amanda's waiting, expecting Samuel to say something that shows a concern for her, or maybe offer something to eat or drink. It is only when she gets no attention from him that she then goes to get herself a drink.

In scene one, Samuel has typically, shown little interest in Amanda so why does Amanda now expect him to change his attitude? Through Amanda, Motsa seems to be saying that women do not give up, but keep hoping for better even if there is no sign of improvement in the way their husbands treat them. This hope may be stimulated by the image that they have of themselves and their married life before they even get married. It is not easy for them to dismiss it.

It is only when Amanda gets herself a drink and brings none for Samuel, that he pays attention to her. He demands to be served with a drink, but Amanda refuses. She tells him she is tired from standing all day long, counting money from the endless queues of people at the bank. Samuel however does not even want to consider what Amanda suggests:

**Sam:** Any for me?

**Amanda:** No! I thought you'd had one already, seeing that you've been home for more than an hour. *[She doesn't move, but continues to drink leisurely. Sam puts down the paper.]*

**Sam:** Can you get some, then?

**Amanda:** Sam, please! Can't you see I'm tired? I've been on my feet all day, taking in money, counting it and giving it out to those endless queues at the bank. Can't I...?

**Sam:** Spare me the details! What you really mean is you don't want to obey me when I tell you to do something? All right, I...

**Amanda:** [*annoyed*] For the sake of peace, why don't you just go to the kitchen and get yourself a drink?

**Sam:** What? The ancestors would chase me out!

**Amanda:** All right, All right! (Scene 2: 41)

At this point of the play, Samuel's reaction to Amanda as she explains how tired she is explains his behaviour. He is torn between two forces for he has to act according to society's expectations, which encourages men to be cruel and harsh. A man who shows kindness and understanding to his wife is regarded as only half a man. Society teaches that in order to feel like a 'real man,' a husband should control his wife and ensure that she obeys him all the time. Samuel tells Amanda to 'spare [him] the details' (ibid) because a woman's reasons for any form of challenging behaviour barely matter if a man is to maintain control over her. Samuel implies that Amanda seems to have forgotten their common roots in Swazi culture. He cunningly - and in a half-jesting manner reminds her of the ancestors, who shaped her subservient position. Samuel's behaviour is driven by historical forces.

At the beginning of the play, where Samuel throws things on the floor it does not mean that he is careless or lazy for his behaviour is typical of Swazi men who seek to demonstrate their control of their wives and maintain their 'kingly' positions. The 'kingly' position is every man's inheritance in this society. If a man behaves in a way not befitting it, the custodians of culture which includes the man's mother are there to remind him. Samuel's mentioning ancestors works and Amanda gets him the drink he has asked for but she suggests they sit down and discuss some issues in their marriage. Her husband does not take her seriously, and tells her that it is not a woman's role to initiate a 'meeting.' Samuel attempts to show intimacy to his wife:

**Sam:** [Going to stand behind her, he puts his arms around her] What's wrong with you today, my princess? You're so touchy! Let's go get some wine. It'll calm your nerves...

**Amanda:** [disengaging herself] What nerves?

**Sam:** [He moves round to face her] Are you all right, Ammy? (Scene 2: 42)

Samuel does not understand what has happened to his wife who has until now been doing everything without complaint. Here, the play suggests that the longer women keep quiet about issues that affect them, the more difficult it becomes for men to accept that there is a problem. The play also shows that a good and well meaning man may behave in a manner that affects his wife's wellbeing because of the expectations of society. Samuel knows the roles of men and women are clearly defined, so he follows suit. Although it has taken her a long time, Amanda decides to address her problem and communicate it to her husband.

Samuel however refuses to sit down and discuss what Amanda has in mind. He avoids it and at this stage Amanda threatens to leave him. The confidence that Amanda portrays intimidates her husband and he reminds her that it would not be a wise thing for her to leave him because marriage is a special thing that she needs to be grateful for:

**Sam:** ...Think carefully before you do anything rash, Amanda. You can't afford to throw a marriage away these days. Ask any woman!

**Amanda:** What about any man? You guys think you're doing us such a big favour by marrying us. You seem totally unaware of the obvious fact that you're doing it to boost your own ego, to proclaim to the whole world that you're OK, you can get a wife if you want one. The truth is, a woman can survive without the likes of you attached to her (Scene 2: 43)

Samuel tries to convince Amanda that there is no need for her to persuade him to discuss anything in their relationship. Realising however that Amanda is not giving up, Samuel blames her and says that what *she* is doing is going to break up their marriage. This 'blame the victim' strategy is an old one which they use in this culture because women work very hard to remove any blame society may cast on them. This is also demonstrated by Amanda who, by the end of the second scene is determined to show Samuel "a thing or two." She maintains this stance at the start of scene 3, however when Gugu, her in-laws arrives she abandons the idea.

#### 4.4.3.3 'Make-up': Women working hard to impress their in-laws

Whilst still in Scene 3, before Samuel and Amanda resolve their issues, Gugu, Samuel's cousin's wife arrives in the late night. She has been sent by Samuel's mother to deliver a message. This is still on the second day where, earlier, Amanda has come home tired, and due to Samuel's refusal to discuss issues she has about their marriage, she has resorted to suspending all her services, including cooking. However, when her sister-in-law arrives Amanda has to get her something to eat. Gugu talks to Amanda in a way which shows she expects to be served and she states what she wants:

**Amanda:** Gugu, can I get you something to...?

**Gugu:** Please, Ammy sweetheart [*slurring the word so that it sounds like 'sweeart'*] – something cold. Choo! I'm so hot! Some biscuits too, if you have them, please! Chooo! [*fanning herself*] (Scene 3: 46)

As a way of treating her in-laws well Amanda goes out of her way to start cooking from scratch. She prepares a full meal for Gugu. This does not mean that she is no longer tired. She still needs to rest, but as a way of covering up and always portraying a good image to her in-laws, Amanda cooks against her will. This is also symbolic of what normally happens among some Swazi women who outdo themselves in an attempt to impress their in-laws or maintain their 'good wife' status. In this society, the approval of a woman by her in-laws is important, especially if *lobolo* was paid for the woman. *Lobolo* is a mechanism that was originally for a good course when two people marry, but has remained to maintain only its binding element; to symbolically seal the relationship between the families of people getting married.

#### 4.4.3.4 *Lobolo* and *Kutekwa*: A woman's marriage to a whole family

Motsa addresses the *lobolo* subject in a mild but very revealing manner. She brings out some hidden facts about women and *lobolo*. In the third scene, still on the second day, when Amanda is insisting to her husband that all services including cooking are suspended until they discuss what concerns her, Samuel reminds her of her position as a wife, and warns her to do as he tells her:

**Amanda:** [*a little nervous in spite of herself, she edges away from him*] I'm trying to get across to you that I find it very hard – waiting on you hand and foot...

**Sam:** [*furious*] You can't talk to me like that, you must do the cooking – you're my wife! Amanda! I paid off all my debts to your uncle and your brothers, didn't I? I paid the full bride-price. You saw me. You were there.

**Amanda:** [*She lets go of the pillow, stands up and moves away from the sofa. She speaks slowly but spiritedly.*] How could I possibly forget? Everyone was so happy! It had happened at last. The big day had come, the day of the auction, the day for buying and selling, for bartering goods – while I stood and watched. How could I forget? Yes, you paid the bride-price, once and for all! But did you ever consider my feelings?

**Sam:** [*attempting to please her*] But you looked happy too. You...

**Amanda:** What Swazi girl wouldn't be, when she is deceived into believing that this is just a custom signifying appreciation of her womanhood? No one ever tells her that, from then on, she must pay the groom-price with her soul until at last she can rest in her grave! Who ever tells her that? No one! She's just a never-tiring donkey, isn't she? (Scene 3: 45)

Through these two characters, Motsa reveals sides of the *lobolo* custom which its perpetrators do not want to admit. As Amanda states, those who favour the custom only say it signifies appreciation of the woman, but the real truth is revealed by Samuel, a man. He tells Amanda to cook *because* he paid his debt. Samuel's mention of a debt reveals that *lobola* is not a sign of appreciation at all, but *lobolo* is a specific fixed number of cattle or amount of money determined by the status of the woman in her family as well as her clan's status among the Swazi people. To agree with men when they make their demands on women, 'goods' they have 'paid for' is to admit that society treats women as 'merchandise'. So, as Amanda contends, on the day that a man's family pays *lobolo*, the two families actually get into negotiations and when they are agreed they make the essential transactions.

When Samuel wonders why Amanda speaks the way she does about *lobolo* whereas on her *lobolo* 'payment' day she looked happy, she reveals the aspect of women's view towards the custom which is seldom mentioned. She explains that indeed, every Swazi woman looks happy when her *lobolo* is paid, and this is justified, because there is a hidden fact about the custom which is never mentioned and even if it is mentioned it can make no sense to women who are desperately waiting for their husband or fiancé to pay their *lobolo*. As already mentioned in the first chapter, during a girl's socialisation it is instilled in her that her significance is in her marriage and all the customary practices that

come with marriage. This is a trap for women because, as Amanda says, it is only when a woman has to pay what Amanda calls 'groom-price' through hard labour that it dawns on any woman what *lobolo* means for her.

The demands imposed on any woman whose *lobolo* has been paid include a requirement to bear children. In an arrangement agreed to by Amanda and Samuel they have decided to wait for some time before she starts a family. However, Samuel's family is not aware of this intimate arrangement and they start demanding part of the 'groom-price' from Amanda. In scene 3, Gugu visits Samuel and Amanda late at night because she has been sent by Samuel's mother. In Swazi society, a man's family has a right over his wife. She is their wife, not his. This is illustrated in both Kuper and Motsa's plays.

#### 4.4.3.5 In-laws' control over a married woman

In a new marriage the man's family scrutinises the way his wife works to see whether she is diligent or lazy. This judgement of a wife by her in-laws is seen as Gugu talks to Samuel behind Amanda's back. Whilst Amanda is in the kitchen preparing food for her, Gugu, starts complaining:

**Gugu:** *[trying to break the ice]* Amanda is taking such a long time! I do hope she's not making me supper. You were just going to bed. Knowing her as I do, starting to cook at this time of night would be far too much bother.

**Sam:** *[He has not been paying much attention, but Gugu's last words goad him into a response].* What do you mean, 'knowing her as you do'?

**Gugu:** *Awu* don't be so touchy, *bhut* Sammy. You know what I mean: our Amanda and the pots and pans are like Russia and America... (Scene 3: 47)

What Gugu says infuriates Samuel and he shows it clearly to Gugu. This is shocking to Gugu because it rarely happens among Swazi men:

**Gugu:** ...Don't take things so personally, *bhut* Sam. You know how it is, you want to say something sensible and your tongue just runs away with you.

**Sam:** If you can't control it, you can leave my house this instant! If all you came for was to come and insult us, there is the door! *[enter Amanda carrying a tray of food]* Get out, get out Gugu! Do you hear me? Leave! (Scene 3: 47)

As we saw in Kuper's play when a man shows intimacy to his wife, his family normally accuses the wife of having bewitched him. They label the man as a weakling, saying *akasindvodza, ngumfati* (he is no man, but a woman). When a man's family realises that he is tender towards his wife, they sometimes start finding fault with her. Gugu talks about Amanda as "our Amanda," Samuel's family's 'property'. Firstly, Gugu complains that Amanda is taking too long and next she implies that Amanda does not like cooking. Much to Gugu's disappointment, Samuel does not like her accusing his wife. He harshly stops her. Gugu persists. This eventually leads to Samuel chasing her.

Samuel's challenging Gugu's insults to his wife identifies him as a disappointment to his family. He does not separate himself from his wife. When Gugu insults Amanda, Samuel interprets it as an insult to them jointly as a couple even more shockingly to Gugu, he tells her to leave his house at once. Whether in the city or in the rural parts of the country, a man's house is regarded as his *family's* house, so when Samuel tells Gugu that she has to leave his house it is not expected of a man who has his own people visiting. The average Swazi man would not stand up and defend his wife but would either take the side of his family or ignore the confrontation completely. Samuel here, therefore, defies the Swazi custom of regarding a woman as a stranger, and so 'betrays' his family by not letting them have full control over his life and wife. He differs from Kuper's Sikova who adheres to everything his parents say.

In scene four Samuel's mother arrives at their house, obviously angry with the young couple following Gugu's report. After greetings, Amanda asks her mother-in-law if she could get her something to drink. Her mother-in-law finds it inappropriate to be asked, and she takes the opportunity to teach her daughter-in-law how to 'behave':

**Mother:** *Hawu 'koti*, you never ask whether someone wants your food or drink, you just offer it. Asking them is like saying – 'I don't want you to eat my food, but I can't bring myself to say so, please say it for me' (Scene 4: 50).



After the blame Amanda tries to modify her question by asking whether she would prefer a cold drink or tea, only to find that again her mother-in-law will always find something wrong with her question:

**Mother:** Cold? Tea? Nothing cold in this weather, child. Give me coffee, *koti*. A hot drink really cools you down. I'd like some rice too, if you have any. *[Amanda goes into the kitchen. While she is out of the room, Mother surveys her surroundings with eyes which miss nothing. Amanda comes back carrying a tray.]* That was quick. It's all these electric things you use.

**Amanda:** Yes, they're a great help.

**Mother:** Child, it's so quiet around here! (Scene 4: 50)

Samuel's mother's reply to Amanda reveals that Amanda can never get it right with her mother-in-law. Whatever she does, her mother-in-law will always find fault. One would expect Samuel's mother to accept anything Amanda offers her because she just blamed her for asking if she would like anything to drink. Although it is a hot day Mother wants coffee, which is a hot and warming drink to "cool" her. This proves that if Amanda had just offered Mother a drink without first asking she would certainly have given her the wrong drink! Similar to Gugu who wanted 'biscuits too if Amanda had any', Mother wants 'some rice too if Amanda has any'. Amanda seems to meet all their requirements; like she brought the cold drink and biscuits in a tray for Gugu, she brings the coffee and a rice meal in a tray for Mother. One would expect Mother to appreciate Amanda for being quick, but Samuel's mother's controlling hand over her daughter-in-law manifests itself in her words to her, as she sees Amanda quickly return with her demands, "That was quick. It's all these electric things you use" (Scene 4: 50).

Samuel's mother is ungrateful to her daughter-in-law. This lack of appreciation for a woman by her husband's family is also demonstrated by Gugu, who complains to Samuel that Amanda is taking too long to prepare a meal at night. Now Mother credits Amanda's swift response to her needs to the electric appliances she uses. Amanda does not take her mother-in-law's comment in a negative way but readily agrees with her that the electric appliances do help. After this instead of just sitting down with her daughter-in-law and enjoying her food, Mother continues to find fault with Amanda. Next she complains that

the place is 'too quiet.' Amanda does not understand what Mother is implying about the quietness until later. I address this in a later section about women and procreativity.

Later, when Amanda has left Samuel and his mother in the room, Samuel keeps calling Amanda's name, unaware that she has left them. His mother complains about their calling each other by name. She hates to hear her son call his wife by her name as if she is still a girl friend, but for Samuel and Amanda, it is normal and easy for them to do so and makes them feel closer to each other. It is more endearing than the usual way of addressing a woman by her surname. Samuel's mother reminds him that calling his wife by her name is not good. She reiterates the unequal ideology which removes endearment from a relationship and encourages oppressive behaviour on the part of men like Samuel - even without their conscious effort.

Older women, as custodians of this culture, believe that if a man openly shows love for his wife, she may overpower him and make him a weakling. Samuel's mother, therefore deliberately mispronounces Amanda's name which is a western name and calls her "*Amandla*" the *SiSwati* term for power:

Mother: *Hawu!* I can see I'm wasting my breath! Samyela, it isn't proper for you and that wife of yours to keep calling each other by name in my presence. She's your wife, not your sister. '*Amandla, Amandla*!' What has happened to our custom and tradition? (Scene 4: 54)

The exclamation, '*Amandla*' (Power) was popularly used during the period of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Therefore, by referring to Amanda as *Amandla*, Samuel's mother also implies that Amanda is a rebel, protesting against accepted practice. Mother's control over Amanda and implying her being a rebel is one of the ridiculous contrariness that prevails where people reclaiming their freedom are negatively labelled, as was the case with the black South Africans who were labelled rebels for fighting for their freedom from white power.

Samuel's mother's aim is to ridicule Samuel and pressurise him into taking the more 'manly' position of controlling his wife. This control over his wife is also evident when she orders Amanda to start a family feeling this to be her 'duty.'

#### 4.4.3.6 Procreation of children and the role of an *Inhlanti* (cleanser)

It is Swazi custom for a mother-in-law to 'tutor' her daughter-in-law. Samuel's mother, therefore, thinks it her duty to remind Amanda that she has to start a family soon. As indicated above, in Swaziland, a newly married woman has pressure from her in-laws who seek to impose ideas and assume some control over her. Samuel's mother thinks that Amanda has no children because biologically she cannot have them. If that is the case, according to Swazi culture, the man's and woman's families arrange for an *inhlanti* to help<sup>111</sup>. Therefore, Samuel's mother takes on her responsibility to orchestrate for Amanda's sister to be her *inhlanti*.

In an attempt to send further cues to Amanda that she needs to bear children, Samuel's mother mentions Amanda's sister, Thandi, to her. Firstly, she asks when Samuel will come home:

**Mother:** ...I have such good news for him. If he's much longer, he'll find me in bed already. This weather sends me to sleep.

**Amanda:** He should have been home an hour ago. Maybe they're in a meeting. What's the good news?

**Mother:** [*chuckling*] Thandi sends him greetings.

**Amanda:** Thandi? Thandi who?

**Mother:** Your little sister. H-o-o! My memory's going! I must be getting old. I forgot to tell you that your mother and sister came to visit us last week. She is growing faster than ... She's as beautiful as the rising sun! [*as an afterthought*] as you were at her age. (Scene 4: 51)

The story that Samuel's mother tries to make up, about Amanda's mother and her sister Thandi visiting, betrays her because Amanda is more in touch with her family than her mother-in-law knows. When Mother realises that Amanda is not accepting her 'help,' she changes the subject and becomes more direct, telling Amanda that there has to be children in her house. She brings in the subject assuming the role of a person who

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<sup>111</sup> See chapter 2, section 2.4.5

sympathises with Amanda's 'curse', "I'm not blaming you for this curse. All I want is to help you, child" (Scene 4:52). The 'sympathy' betrays Mother more as she suggests that Amanda should go to a traditional healer who has helped many women who were not able to have children. Amanda becomes angry and asks Mother to drop the matter because there is no problem at all. In a confident way, Mother tells Amanda that her son will listen to her about this: "I know my son will listen to me. He always has" (ibid).

When Samuel gets home drunk, Amanda asks him where he has been. Mother does not approve of her daughter-in-law doing this to her son and corrects her, "men will be men. Never ask them where they have been" (Scene 4: 53). Amanda does not agree with her mother-in-law's correction. In this society her rejection of correction is not appropriate behaviour for a daughter-in-law', but Amanda wants to address matters of her family. Although she is a woman who respects her mother-in-law, calling by her praise name, such as "Forgive me *Hlubi!* ...*Samketi!* *Hlubi!*" (Scene 4:50), she does not tolerate what Mother is imposing on her:

**Amanda:** Sometimes Sam just takes the car keys and disappears for hours on end without telling me where he's going. When he comes back I'm not supposed to ask where he's been! What am I, a shadow? A slave who mustn't question anything her lord and master does? I am a human too. Doesn't anybody care how I feel, with so many accidents on the roads, and so much violent crime?

**Mother:** You're too inquisitive, child.

**Sam:** Mother, let her be. You can't win with Amanda.

**Amanda:** All right! So, it's a declaration of war, is it? If you're going to take sides with one another, I know what to do! [*She storms out of the room, slamming the kitchen door behind her*] (Scene 4: 43-54).

In the polygamous Swazi society, mothers-in-law especially are the ones who encourage men to have multiple sexual relationships. In this culture, a man who has multiple sexual relations is not regarded as unfaithful, but is called *inganwa*<sup>112</sup> a positive rather than negative term. In the next section I discuss how the play illustrates the oppressive aspect of Swazi society which regards young girls as instruments to keep men 'young.'

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<sup>112</sup> See chapter one.

#### 4.4.3.7 Younger girls to 'rekindle the fire'

Samuel's mother regards Amanda's departure as her opportunity to reach to her son and advise him what to do. The next dialogue between mother and son illuminates this state of affairs. As Samuel calls for his wife and gets no response his mother helps him:

**Mother:** She's not here, Sam. She's left in a hurry. You're talking to her shadow.  
*[Mother sits down next to Sam]* Tell me, son, is everything all right between you two?

**Sam:** Yes. Perfect.

**Mother:** There is a cold wind blowing between you and the woman Samyela. I can feel it. Don't be afraid to tell me the truth, my son. I am your mother. When you're hungry and it's getting dark, I'll always be there to hold your hand and walk with you through the night to where there's fire and a hot meal waiting.

**Sam:** *[Taking no notice of her]* Where's Amanda?

**Mother:** *Hawu!* I can see I am wasting my breath... (Scene 4: 54)

Samuel and his mother perceive the situation differently. Samuel is drunk and is not actually aware that his wife has just left him so he continues talking to her. When Samuel says everything is perfectly well between himself and Amanda his mother thinks that he is hiding the truth. The problem between Samuel and Amanda is not the one his mother is thinking. The immediate problem is that Amanda feels overburdened with the housework and wants them to discuss it as husband and wife. Samuel's mother however thinks that her son is dissatisfied with his wife. She expresses herself in metaphoric terminology about sex as Swazi people normally do, referring to sex as 'food.'

Samuel's mother thinks that her son is starving sexually, and wants to help him by getting a young girl who will give him the sexual 'warmth and food' he needs. This is encapsulated in the phrase, "fire and a hot meal waiting" (Scene 4: 54). With the support of Amanda's family she thinks that by right, Samuel can claim Amanda's younger sister, Thandi. Whenever a woman's family support her husband's claim to a younger daughter they do so to avoid a situation where their daughter contests with strangers.

Samuel and his mother have a communication breakdown because he is literal and his mother is figurative. His mother thinks there is a more intimate and sexual problem. Samuel finds the note Amanda has left him, which states, "Our problem is a more

personal, and intimate one,” and at the same time his mother suggests to him that they go to the traditional healer, Majokozela. This makes the misunderstanding worse, because Samuel thinks, by a ‘more personal, and intimate’ problem, Amanda means he is not capable of satisfying her sexual needs. He also thinks that his mother suggests that they should go to the traditional healer so that the healer may help him revive his supposedly lost virility. He refuses to go to the traditional healer:

**Sam:** *[to himself]* Intimate...No, Mother, I couldn't. I'd feel so naked and unmanly, exposing myself to another man. *[to himself]* I never realised Amanda thought I was so inadequate! I can't have lost my manhood! (Scene 4: 55)

The misunderstanding between Samuel and his mother gets worse because of the figurative expressions. His mother tells him that she thinks Thandi can help them, and Samuel tells his mother he does not understand how the girl can help:

**Mother:** She could clean your house. You know the old custom!  
**Sam:** Clean...clean my house? *[suddenly understanding her meaning]* Mother, No! One wife is quite enough for me. Besides, what ...? (Scene 4: 56)

Samuel's response after realizing his mother's point shows that, similar to Sikova, the character in Hilda Kuper's play, he is not keen on taking his wife's sister for second wife. His mother is disappointed and uses more demeaning figures of speech to refer to Amanda, as a “dying fire” that needs “rekindling”, and a “dry well”. Although Samuel is relieved to know that he is not the subject under scrutiny, and that he is not considered to have a sexual incapability problem, he realizes he needs to talk to his wife extensively. His mother complains about his attachment to Amanda, and Samuel boldly tells her that it is because she is his wife. His mother is finally disappointed when the truth comes out:

**Sam:** *[touched]* Let me explain something, Mother. You don't understand...  
**Mother:** *[paying no attention to him, she mumbles to herself]* What a pity, feeding an unproductive cow. All the cattle in my husband's kraal were swept by the river, *all* of them!  
**Sam:** Mother, my wife isn't barren! It's just that we agreed to wait a year.  
**Mother:** Not barren? Not barren? Oh, it's you then? I should have known...  
**Sam:** *[losing patience]* What exactly do you want of me, Mother?

**Mother:** [*offended*] If you are the ox, then I tell you that girl will leave you! (Scene 4: 56-57)

Motsa's representation of the characters Samuel and his mother is fictional, yet it is a familiar scenario in everyday life in Swaziland. Samuel is able to stand firmly against his mother's instigating him to abandon his wife for her younger sister. It is not very clear whether Samuel would have been this firm to his mother if his wife, Amanda had maintained the 'good wife'; 'silent wife' status, as the case is with the majority of women. It is evident that in the chain of events that Amanda set in motion; taking the initiative in challenging her husband's behaviour; suggesting that they discuss their relationship; and taking a firm stand in leaving him until they sit down to resolve the matter, Samuel has got her point thus his reaction to his mother. It is evident that he is ready to sit down and talk over issues with his wife.

#### **4.4.3.8 Dialogue: Communication and conflict resolution in marriage**

The fifth, which is the last scene of the play, takes place in the living room. It is mid morning of the fourth day. Amanda is tidying up some newspapers as usual and preparing to iron clothes. Samuel is sitting on the sofa polishing his shoes. In her first short speech, Amanda yawns and exclaims she is hungry implying that she expects to be given some food. The Swazi society expects women to serve food, but here Amanda expects to be *served*. By doing this, she subverts the 'woman-provide-food' societal value. When she realises that Samuel is not keen to talk to her, she asks him if he knows why Mother is here. Samuel responds to her in a way that indicates he is not interested in talking about their 'problem.' Amanda declares their meeting open, and tells him she assumes he understands why she, Amanda, is leaving. Samuel tells her that he is tired of her threats to leave him and wants to know what he has done to deserve the "torture" (Scene 5: 68).

That Samuel now wants to know why Amanda is leaving shows that she has been successful in getting him to discuss things. Realising that she has got him to a position of readiness to listen and talk to her, Amanda tells Samuel that it is not what he has done but rather what he has not done. Samuel aligns this reply with what his mother has said earlier – that Amanda needs a baby, and if she does not have one she will leave him, but

Amanda assures him that she is not ready for a baby at all, as they agreed when they married. Perhaps then, Amanda thinks he has other girls? To this, she tells him that girls are the least of her worries showing that she is a confident woman not threatened by the possibility of Samuel having other women. Then she emphatically tells him that their problem is “Intramartial *inactivity*” (Scene 5: 58). This phrase makes Samuel very angry almost to a point of hitting Amanda, saying that she is insulting his manhood.

Amanda realises that Samuel has misunderstood her and then explains that the phrase has nothing to do with his “virility or lack of it” (ibid). Next, Samuel demands an explanation of the phrase, to which Amanda responds:

**Amanda:** [*with great composure*] Sam, I’m a woman – an African woman.

**Sam:** Go on philosopher!

**Amanda:** But that does not mean I’m living in the Africa of Somhlolo and Shaka.

**Sam:** Oh! Good at history too? I’m impressed.

**Amanda:** [*not discouraged*] In the morning we both get up and go to work. We do equally demanding jobs, but when we get home you sit down with the newspaper while I do all the housework. You expect me to be as strong as an ox! I have to cook, clean, put out your clothes for the next day, and on top of all that find energy to...

**Sam:** Ha! *Ingene yeSandlwane!* Women’s Lib rears its ugly head again! (Scene 5: 59)

Amanda mentions a very serious issue here, which is one of the sources of the social problems facing Swazi women today. Swazi society has values which were orchestrated by people who lived in ancient Swaziland. Amanda uses the olden days’ kings such as Somhlolo and Shaka to refer to the period. The laws of the Swazi people that make life difficult for women were devised during an era where women did not go to work in paid full-time employment as they do today. Samuel avoids the argument by referring to the Women’s Liberation struggle, which most people who oppress women use mockingly when they try to silence women who call for emancipation. Referring to the Women’s Liberation struggle is a common practice by the Swazi society to label women as rebellious and hard headed whenever they challenge their oppressors. When Samuel attempts to avoid the discussion of their problem using this flimsy point, Amanda corrects him promptly:



**Amanda:** No, no, no, Sammy, you don't understand. You've got me all wrong. We're well past that first fever of liberation. You're out of touch... (Scene 5: 59).

Amanda goes on to explain to Samuel that she finds it difficult to cope with all the housework he expects her to do alone, whilst he rests when they come from work. Samuel tries to trivialise Amanda's point by asking her if she wants the role of men. To his disappointment the few things he mentions are roles which working women like Amanda already share equally with men. To demonstrate her point, Amanda lists some of the things she is unhappy with in their house:

**Amanda:** *[suddenly charged with strength and fury, she moves about picking up all the things scattered around the room. She itemizes them, then she flings them across the room, littering the floor with clothes.]* All right, you asked for it! *ONE:* Dirty trousers and underwear, left lying on the floor, on the bed, a metre away from the laundry-basket, but never *in* it! *TWO:* Socks, dirty socks, some without partners, others with wrong partners, left all over the house. Our home is a sock-playground! *[As she starts on item three, Mother appears, wearing her dressing-gown in soft colours. Amanda completely engrossed in her grievances does not see her. Sam does. As Mother opens her mouth to speak, Sam holds up his hand to indicate that she shouldn't say anything. She obeys his signal, although she doesn't understand what is happening. Shrugging her shoulders, she disappears into the kitchen... [Amanda continues]... she picks a pile of newspapers and cradles it in her arms]* Oh yes, the paper... (Scene 5: 60)

Amanda confidently states her case to her husband, and had not even seen Mother when she came in. Samuel had signaled her not to talk, thus keeping his mother out of the affairs of her son and Mother does not persist but leaves them alone. Through this wordless encounter between Mother and son and unseen by Amanda, Motsa shows that although some mothers-in-law take it as their duty to run the households of their sons, the sons can successfully keep the mothers out of their businesses by simply asking them not to become involved. Mother does not understand what is happening, but she complies with her son's request not to say anything and leaves.

When Amanda gets to the fifth and final point; the newspaper, she elaborates how it dominates their life by being everywhere in the house. She complains that the newspaper has overtaken her in her husband's heart, because even if she wants to talk to him about any urgent matter, he does not want to be disturbed when he is with the paper, "his

bride.” She also tells him that he treats the paper like an additional member of the family.

As she talks, Amanda scatters the newspaper on the floor:

*[as Amanda throws down the last few papers, Sam begins gathering them together and making a neat pile against the wall. Then he starts on the rest of the things, calling each item as he collects it, mimicking Amanda. Amanda stops and watches him, then bursts out laughing. They begin tidying up the mess together. Mother reappears, but neither of them notices her. She stands still, trying to work out what's going on] (scene5: 60).*

At this point there is a change in the play. As Amanda confidently voices her concerns to her husband, he begins to understand her. He is the one who, in turn, picks up the scattered papers. Although serious, Samuel makes it a light hearted affair by mimicking her, to which she also bursts out laughing. “They begin tidying the mess together” (Scene 5: 60). This shows a significant change in the lives of this couple because before Amanda voiced her concerns. Samuel would not help her in tidying up at all, as we saw in the first three scenes of the play.

Another significant change is that they begin to have common interests, which has not been the case before:

**Sam:** *[As he bends to pick up a stray piece of newspaper, something catches his eye. He calls out to Amanda.]* Hey, this is news, *uyati* [you know]! As from tomorrow we won't be restricted to fourteen days' stay in South Africa!

**Amanda:** *[interested, she rushes over to Sam, wanting to read the news item herself]* *Hawu* [Wow]! When was the law changed? *[Sam throws down the paper, grabs Amanda round the waist and tickles her. She breaks free and, laughing, reaches for a rolled-up sock and throws it at him. Samuel immediately picks it up and puts it back where it was. Mother claps her hands quietly, but the two young people go on laughing and throwing things at each other (Scene 5: 60)]*

What happens at this stage of the play illustrates changes in the lives of the couple. There is an exchange or sharing of roles between Amanda and Samuel. Formerly, it was Amanda who replaced things to their appointed places but now it is Samuel who takes on the chore. Samuel's mother serves as the eye and mouth of society. She watches out to see if the young people behave accordingly, and if there is some correction that needs to be done, she is the voice of society to speak to the young people. As she watches her son

and his wife playing happily, she thinks something is wrong, because this society does not encourage married couples to have this kind of fun. She ignores them for some time but she cannot hold it any longer:

**Mother:** *[clearing her throat]* Mhm! 'Koti (daughter-in-law)! Is breakfast nearly ready?

**Amanda:** *[sobering]* Oh! Breakfast! Yes, Mother, I'll make it right away. Oh! But I still have to make the bed! *[torn between the two]* I'll cook breakfast first then see to the bed later.

**Sam:** *[a little unsure of himself, he says seriously]* Let me help, dear. You go and make the bed. I'll try and fix us something to eat.

**Mother:** *[coming up close to them]* Wha-a-t? Are you completely out of your mind, Samyela? (Scene 5: 60)

Samuel's mother tries to resume her role as 'tutor' to her daughter-in-law by reminding her, indirectly, that her duty is to cook food for the family. When she asks Amanda if breakfast is ready, Amanda does not argue with her, but she says she will do it but quickly adds that she has to make the bed first. This way, Amanda indirectly presents her everyday problem to her mother-in-law. When Amanda decides she will cook the breakfast first, she does it as a way of showing courtesy to her mother-in-law. The most dramatic point is made by Samuel who offers to cook breakfast. Showing his change of attitude, Samuel realises that indeed, Amanda has more to do within a limited time. His mother cannot believe her ears because in the Swazi culture men are discouraged to be in the kitchen, let alone to cook. She seeks to correct him right away, by asking him if he is out of his mind.

Both Amanda and Samuel ignore Mother and carry on with their conversation. Amanda excitedly asks her husband what he is going to prepare for breakfast, and he admits he cannot cook at all:

**Sam:** *[Ignoring Mother]* To be honest, I don't know. *[he laughs to hide his embarrassment]* Actually I'm totally useless in that department. That's why I never go near the kitchen. It makes me feel uncomfortable. *[with fresh enthusiasm]* But they say you are never too old to learn! First I'll switch on the kettle, and then... (Scene 5: 61)

When Samuel confesses to being useless in the kitchen he indicates that during his upbringing as the case is with the majority of Swazi men, he did not get the opportunity to learn how to cook. However he is embarrassed about the situation because he is aware that there are some men who know how to cook. These men were evidently brought up by mothers who subverted the expectations of society, and taught their sons how to cook. By making Samuel use the negative term, 'useless' to describe himself, Motsa subverts the Swazi society which regards men who cook as 'weak' and 'unmanly' and she labels Samuel's 'manly' attribute of not going near the kitchen as a sign of weakness. Samuel identifies and names his lack of cooking skills as a limitation and hopes he is not too old to learn. Much to the disappointment of his mother Samuel is determined to learn new things which his mother did not teach him. The couple continue to have a dialogue about the new life they are starting, and Amanda is determined to make things easy for her husband:

**Amanda:** *[gaily]* I've got an idea! Why don't you make the bed and I'll fix some breakfast? That way we'll get everything done in half the time! Two pairs of hands are much better than one.

**Sam:** *[relieved]* That I can manage!

**Amanda:** *[happily]* Off you go then! *[Sam and Amanda exit through the bedroom and kitchen doors]*

**Mother:** *[sitting down on the sofa and yawning]* There's no telling what these children will do as the sun sets and rises – no telling! (Scene 5: 61)

In this part of the play where Samuel and his wife continue to exchange ideas and agree with each other on what to do next, Motsa illustrates that if a woman takes the initiative to challenge her oppression, she can get positive results. Although all along Mother has been trying to bring her son and daughter-in-law into the 'right perspective' aligned with Swazi society and its cultural expectations, her final gesture of sitting down and yawning as she sees them do what is 'never done' in her culture shows that she has given up. It is therefore, a deliberate endeavour by Motsa to end the play with Samuel and his wife excited about the song, 'You Win' which was then a new release by a pop music group, the Bee Gees. Like a newly released song, is the new life that the couple is venturing into.

#### 4.4.4 Conclusion of Motsa's work

Zodwa Motsa's play, *The Paper Bride* is relevant to the development of women within a literary drama text. The first scene of the play illustrates a situation where a woman has a problem. Amanda lives within an oppressive scenario where her husband does not help her but instead adds her work load. In the second scene Amanda, as the person experiencing a problem attempts to address it. When her husband refuses to have a dialogue with her, she thinks of options to take. She decides to leave her husband. In a way similar to Theatre-for-Development workshops, Amanda does not get instant answers, but she negotiates her own development by talking, seemingly making threats, and even sometimes seemingly giving in to the oppressive hand of her in-laws, Gugu and Mother.

The last scene where Amanda and her husband have a dialogue about how to make changes in their life resembles a workshop scenario where the participants exchange ideas that lead to possible options to take as they implement their development. Amanda succeeds in the final scene, when change takes place in her household. The play ends well with Samuel articulating that he is willing to make changes and learn how to do some of the housework. His decision does not guarantee that he will change spontaneously, but shows that whether he learns fast or not, the struggle to change is in progress.

*The Paper Bride* goes beyond Dhlomo's and Kuper's plays. While they expose the pressures that society exerts on women, Motsa's play provides possibilities for addressing problems. It firstly exposes the problems and then challenges the male dominance rife in society. It critiques, challenges and subverts male authority. In addition to challenging the detrimental force, it presents a scenario where a relationship that has been on the verge of disintegration comes back to life through engaging in a dialogue.

#### 4.5 Conclusion of the Chapter

The three plays I have discussed in this chapter all address issues affecting women. They do this in varying levels. Dhlomo's *The girl who killed to save* exposes the control of

women over women, but does not portray how women can deal with the problem. It leaves the situation with no possible way of dealing with it. His second play, *Cetshwayo* also shows how women are controlled by men, but it goes further to portray a woman who refuses to fully surrender to men's manipulation. Kuper's play, *A witch in my heart* exposes the plight of Swazi women who are victims of the cultural practices and beliefs of society. These women are left helpless because even Bigwapi, the only character who attempts to defy the control of society over women ends as a victim of society because her efforts are engulfed within the same oppressive society. Unlike Hilda Kuper's character, Bigwapi, who attempts but fails to resist the pressure exerted by the patriarchal society, Motsa's protagonist, Amanda succeeds. Motsa's play is the only one which is successful in exposing the manipulation of women by Swazi society and also addressing the problem in a way similar to Theatre for Development, employing dialogue to resolve a conflict within the play.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Experimental and youth initiatives in Theatre-for-Development**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, I discuss the development of Theatre-for-Development in Swaziland linking it with developmental activities in communities since independence, most of which were planned by government and then implemented by the communities. I discuss how some theatre groups were established with the aim of serving communities and how they work together with the NGOs in the country at a time when all other developmental programmes seemed to be sidelined by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. I begin by discussing one of the first Theatre-for-Development workshops run by The Family Life Association of Swaziland (FLAS) and then two others organised by Swazi youth in two different communities.

#### **5.1 Background information on Theatre-for-Development in Swaziland**

When Swaziland got its independence in 1968, development became the country's priority. The government planned the country's development to focus on four main areas: education, health, agriculture and business enterprise so many communities engaged in projects that promoted expansion of knowledge in these areas. They used performances including singing, dancing, praise poems, short plays and skits to disseminate information on these priority areas. The Swaziland Broadcasting Service also worked in cooperation with rural communities by being involved in developmental activities, recording and airing the workshop proceedings from various communities. The radio programme devised for development encapsulated its theme in a song:

*Siyatfutfuka! Siyatfutfuka!  
Siyatfutfuka! Tsine Maswati!  
...Tinkhundla nentfufuko!*

(We are developing! We are developing!  
We Swazis are developing!)

### *Tinkhundla* and development!

The theme of the song was that the people were committed to development at community level through the *Tinkhundla* (constituencies). The government placed extension workers, *Balimisi* (agricultural instructors) and *Bolomakhaya* (home economists) in stations that were called Rural Development Areas (RDA). Their brief was to teach the rural community people new ways of 'improving' their standard of living that included 'better' farming methods and equipment, food preparation and preservation, health conscious practices and income awareness including income generation methods.

The Ministry of Agriculture's focus on a commercially-oriented approach prioritised national development over the needs of ordinary families. The majority of able bodied men had left the rural areas to work either in the urban areas or in the mines in the Republic of South Africa<sup>113</sup>. This absence of men meant that it was largely women who were to implement the government's development plans.

As part of their development activities, the agricultural extension officers taught people how to go beyond subsistence farming and start farming for commercial purposes. For example, people had to start using fertilizers and special chemically treated seed for their farming instead of their long standing tradition of using kraal manure and selected seed from each previous year's harvest. As commercial farmers, in addition to using oxen and ploughs for their farming, the people had to buy tractors thus all the new 'development' strategies required the people to spend money which they did not have in the first place.

In some parts of the country such as the low-veld<sup>114</sup>, the soil is naturally fertile and does not require use of fertilizers, but once fertilisers have been used, it becomes spoilt and then requires continuous use of fertilizers. This once advantageous situation became a setback because many people used the fertilisers only to find that they could not continue doing so. Maize is the staple food and the chief crop but maize produced from chemically treated seeds could not be used as seed for the next crop. In the excitement to 'develop,'

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<sup>113</sup> The Republic of South Africa is the name of South Africa before 1994.

<sup>114</sup> See Chapter 2.



many farmers abandoned their own specially selected seed and started using the commercial variety, only to find themselves trapped in a situation where they could not revert to their traditional practice, yet they lacked the finances required to continue with the new. That was a typical problem resulting from 'top-down' development.

It was not until a decade later that some effort was made to address the mismatch in development. Part of this happened through the establishment of an adult education wing in the Department of Extra Mural Studies (DEMS), at the University of Swaziland. In October, 1981 the country hosted a very large workshop at The Nhlanguano Farmers' Training Centre where Non-Formal Educators from universities in the Southern African region had come to serve as resource people. The outcome of the workshop was that the extension workers developed theatre skills which they used in their work among rural communities of the country. At the same time as there were improvements in involving communities in their own development, there were also some theatre artists who became interested in working with communities by taking their theatrical performances to the communities.

#### **5.1.1 More development: collaboration of NGOs in Swaziland**

In 1983, as a response to an appeal from the Ministry of Health for better coordination of Primary Health Care activities in pursuit of the government goal of health for all by the year 2000, organizations involved in the promotion of primary health care came together to form the Coordinating Assembly of Non Governmental Organizations (CANGO). In addition to enforcing the fight against health problems, they aimed to fight poverty. In 1987 their constitution was amended to enable this organization to encompass all NGOs in development, thus becoming a truly nation-wide umbrella body for all NGOs. Fourteen years later, CANGO embraced a strategic shift to play a key role in influencing the poverty environment and then aim "to see people taking charge of their lives in an environment devoid of poverty, disease, discrimination and socio-economic instability"<sup>115</sup>. CANGO seeks to be a common NGO voice and resource for serving and representing the concerns of the poor, disadvantaged, and marginalized.

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<sup>115</sup> The CANGO Mission Statement.

### 5.1.2 Development of theatre for the people in Swaziland

After independence throughout the 1980s there was a movement towards reconnecting with roots. This gained impetus in line with what the Swazi king<sup>116</sup> had advocated. In 1989 Matiwane Manana, a multitalented artist, established a theatre group: *The People's Educational Theatre*. The aim was to entertain people in their own language and culture. Most early productions were a one-man-show. Manana composed and sang songs, wrote and performed poetry, wrote and produced plays and became one of the first Swazi writers to be published in early *SiSwati* anthologies. His plays and other productions were originally staged at The Theatre Club in Mbabane, but that soon changed as he started working with communities which were interested in theatre. His theatre group became known for staging plays that raised people's awareness on issues such as the stigmatisation of disabled people in employment spheres.

Later, in the same year as Manana's theatrical venture, Modison Salayedvwa Magagula, a teacher, veteran writer, and editor for Macmillan Publishers established a theatre group whose aim was encapsulated in its name, *Siphila Nje* Drama Society (SNDS), which means, 'this is how we live'. Similar to Manana's, SNDS sought to entertain the people by theatre that is representative of their own lives. Magagula wanted wanted "to promote Swazi culture and contemporary Swazi way of life"<sup>117</sup>. The initial membership of SNDS was made up of his friends. SNDS took drama to people, performing in school halls and *tinkhundla* open arenas. They performed songs, dances, drumming, praise poetry, story telling, riddles and jokes to make their audiences laugh. Their performances had features of western theatre. More theatre groups were established following Manana and Magagula's example.

### 5.1.3 The Association of Swaziland Theatre Groups (ASTG)

In 1996 four of the theatre groups in Swaziland came together to form 'The Association of Swaziland Theatre Groups' (ASTG). It included People's Education Theatre (PET),

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<sup>116</sup> See also Chapter 1 – King Sobhuza II's resistance to the influence of missionaries who encouraged Swazi people to abandon their culture.

<sup>117</sup> Personal interview, Swaziland, August 2005

Siphila Nje Drama Society, Fakalikhono Cultural Group and Phefumula Africa. Its aim was to enhance the development of theatre practitioners by creating better opportunities through advocacy, lobbying, training and by facilitating the provision of necessary services to the society<sup>118</sup>. They wanted to advance an empowering and *conscientizing* theatre practice. ASTG had a fast growing wing of youth theatre groups from various communities. The performances by youth theatre groups demonstrated to be a close resemblance of Theatre-for-Development as I have described in the introduction chapter. They also demonstrated a commitment to addressing gender issues as an answer to the demands of women in communities.

Magagula had his first encounter with Theatre-for-Development in Botswana in 2004 where he participated in a workshop. He was impressed by the approach and decided to adopt it when he got back to Swaziland:

What I have seen in Botswana is really good. We also started something similar in 1996, when theatre groups came together to form the ASTG. I know this version will not be easy for us to implement well in Swaziland, but I think it's high time we use it properly here as well in order to benefit the country from it (Personal Interview, August 2005).

Although Magagula saw value in what he found in Botswana he felt it would not be easy to implement in Swaziland because most Swazi people view theatre as an activity for young people. He felt that it would be difficult to involve adults in performances in the beginning, until they get used to the idea. However, he added, that if the adults in Botswana did it so would the Swazis after some hard collaborative efforts both by the community members committed to development and the theatre practitioners among them.

The formation of ASTG could not have come at a better time. The HIV/AIDS pandemic was taking its toll. The theatre groups therefore came handy in the fight against HIV/AIDS from 2000 onwards, when there was substantial cooperative effort from the

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<sup>118</sup> The mission of ASTG is to fight against poverty and other anti development forces in Swaziland using theatre practice (June 1998).

government and the various NGOs. The involvement of NGOs made it possible for theatre practitioners to attempt Theatre-for-Development in a way closer to the ideal described earlier in the first chapter. Now there has been a shift from the 'top-down' performances that were common in Swaziland before and during 1990s.

#### **5.1.4 Redirection of focus from all development projects to HIV/AIDS**

The seriousness of HIV/AIDS in Swaziland attracted almost every citizen's attention. The level of absenteeism from work followed by a series of deaths - sometimes within the same companies or organizations - has been noticeable:

All we desperately need is the involvement of all the stakeholders, including government, influential people and the ordinary citizens, in spreading the positive message. We all need to educate and inform the masses about the realities of the disease: the gist of the message is that HIV is not only a concern to a few but everyone. (The Swazi Observer, Wednesday April, 2003).

In 2003 the Minister of Health at the time, Dr Phetsile Dlamini, urged Swazi people to learn from Namibia, where theatre had been adopted as a mode of communication in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The minister's recognition of the effectiveness of Theatre-for-Development in addressing issues that affect people's lives confirmed its effectiveness as a tool in the development process. As a public voice of authority, the minister's words proved significant in urging theatre practitioners and communities to come together in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Everyone called out in one voice, *Yindzaba yetfu sonkhe* (this concerns all of us)<sup>119</sup>.

In agreement with the minister's view, Maswati Dlodlu, the Secretary General of ASTG voiced his concern about Swaziland's neglect of theatre, at a time when theatre could be used advantageously for the nation's health. He indicated that in the recent past there had been a serious limitation in terms of the participation of theatre artists in the fight against the pandemic. Dlodlu appreciated the Minister of Health's acknowledgment of the potential of theatre in communication:

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<sup>119</sup> This is a song composed by Siphila Nje Drama Society.

The country's policy makers have been enlightened that theatre is one of the best vehicles of communication: Theatre talent [sic] is all over the country, but it is being under-utilised and this is due to lack of strategy in place to make use of the resources available for the struggle (The Swazi Observer, Wednesday April 9, 2003).

The Minister of Health's plea to all stakeholders to utilise theatre artists to disseminate information on HIV/AIDS was well received. More NGOs started using theatre groups in their developmental projects more than ever before. Previously, The Family Life Association in Swaziland (FLAS), UNICEF and the Lutheran Development Service (LDS) were almost the only NGO to use theatre for information dissemination. In my discussion of the theatre activities that follow I concentrate on significant activities post 2000. They are all based in communities, and include the work of both youth and adult members of the communities.

## **5.2 FLAS and UNICEF: Education for Life Workshop**

In 1997, three staff members of The University of Swaziland, C.M. Magagula, J.O. Odumbe and S. Marshall, undertook research which showed that there was a need for collaboration between the public and private sectors in the provision of family life education in Swaziland:

Collaboration between government agencies and organisations was not a success because of red tape and bureaucracy. The government also tended to centralise the decision making process and there was a lack of policy defining the nature of collaboration between government, NGOs, and the private sector (Magagula, C.M., Odumbe, J.O., and Marshall S., "The nature of Collaboration between the public and Non-Governmental Organization sector in the provision of Family Life Education in Swaziland" 1997)

This research immediately led to closer collaboration between all developmental bodies and communities throughout the country. In 1998 a further survey by FLAS showed that Swazi youth had numerous problems which included being sexually active from a very early age often resulting in teenage pregnancy, ignorance of the human reproductive system, and a lack of communication with parents. After these findings FLAS decided to redirect its focus specifically towards youth development and, with financial aid from

UNICEF, initiated an organization called Swaziland Youth against HIV/AIDS (SYUAHA, *Education for Life: A Behavioural Change Facilitators' Guide* 2000)

FLAS attempted to correct the centralised problems identified by the survey (Magagula et al: 1997). Members of FLAS visited all *tinkhundla* and held meetings with the community leaders and community members. They acknowledged that the implications of HIV/AIDS on Swazi youth constituted a major social threat to the future of the country. FLAS decided to organize workshops for young people as a way forward towards implementing the desired change. Each community chose youth representatives. One of the strategies that FLAS identified as relevant to the implementation of change was the use of theatre.

### **5.3 FLAS Youth Theatre-for-Development Workshop**

As a trusted organization that had already been working with various Swazi communities for two decades, FLAS implemented the first Theatre-for-Development workshop. The workshop focused on community development, in order to give communities a voice and a significant position in the development process. UNICEF funded it.

In 2001, during school holidays a two week long peer educator's training workshop was held at *Emafini* Centre in Mbabane. Youth representatives from communities in the whole country participated. In the first week FLAS staff members taught about sexual and reproductive health and in the second week, FLAS employed Nicolas Mamba, a theatre practitioner to facilitate drama. Mamba was assisted by Macford Sibanda, another theatre practitioner who had previously been involved in Theatre –for-Development workshops in Zimbabwe. The facilitators taught the young participants performance skills such as collective play-making and improvisation.

The first day of the second week was focussed on discussions identifying the main issues which young people think are a problem in their communities. Among the issues were the

HIV/AIDS pandemic, 'baby dumping'<sup>120</sup> and incest<sup>121</sup>. The young people articulated that although most people thought HIV/AIDS was the main problem in the country, there were other latent issues related to the pandemic which urgently needed addressing.

On the second day the participants devised a play incorporating the issues they had identified. They composed songs and chants that were to feature in the performance and on the third and fourth days they rehearsed the play. On the fifth day they continued rehearsing the play but tried different ways of developing the storyline and it was here that the young people discovered their potential to alter a play and bring up new issues within what had started as a play addressing few issues. On the sixth day they realised that their final performance within communities may not be the same due to the reactions of the participants. With the help of the two facilitators the participants decided to plant some of the actors among the audience in order to probe issues they had already identified as important, in case the audience did not mention them at all. On the sixth day they rehearsed the play again, but this time developing issues suggested by the audience. *Crucially they did not use any scripts.* They decided to be free with the words they were to use.

On the final day the young people performed the play for FLAS and UNICEF staff in order for them to see the product of the two week workshop. The Director of FLAS, Dzado Khetsiwe Dlamini, Jerome Shongwe and other officials were impressed with the work of the young participants. As the workshop drew to an end, the young people were assured that their product was going to be taken to different communities in the country which were going to be identified by FLAS. They decided to hold one day workshops on

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<sup>120</sup> The Times of Swaziland frequently reports cases of 'baby dumping'. In Swaziland the act of girls abandoning their children is commonly called dumping. This stems from the fact that most of the girls throw the babies into pit latrines, as in the case of Chief Loyiwe Maziya's daughter Zanele (Times of Swaziland, 28<sup>th</sup> August 2007). One of the main causes of women and girls to dump their babies is lack of means to support the baby. Girls mainly dump their babies when the man responsible for the pregnancy has denied it or has threatened to harm the girl if she names them as responsible for the pregnancy (12<sup>th</sup> April 2006).

<sup>121</sup> According to Mandla Lufhondo, a counsellor at SWAGAA, incest is one of the problems of child abuse that SWAGAA has to deal with continuously (personal interview in Manzini –August 2005)

Saturdays when schools were off. The young people really liked the idea of participating within different communities.

FLAS used their research findings to decide the communities in which the play was to be presented. They chose nineteen communities, most of which are in the Manzini region because that is the where the greatest need is due to the fact that proportionally, the Manzini region is the most heavily populated in the country. Many young people attended the Saturday workshops and a discussion was provoked around issues that were raised in the performance.

### **5.3.1 Young people's play: *Umkhuhlane eveni* (illness in the community)**

Initially, when the young people started working on the storyline, one of them perceived the community as 'ill,' as it were, so the play should start with an 'ill' community where many people are dying and so there has to be a community meeting where they interrogate their situation, investigating what is wrong, what the causes may be, as well as how to curb the 'illness.' Initially by 'illness' they meant HIV/AIDS, but as the workshop went on they identified more issues which needed to be addressed and which they regarded as part of the 'illness' of society. They decided to bring these issues into the storyline, so, the storyline changed as the play developed.

The play opens with singing and chanting by people at *enkhundleni* (constituency centre) of a contemporary rural community. There is a problem. Many people are falling ill and they are not getting better. Many are very poor and live below acceptable human standards; they cannot afford even a meagre meal such as thin porridge with neither milk nor sugar, a luxury for such people. They also have no clean drinking water. It is not very clear where the demarcation line between poverty and illness is for this community. Notably, although in the community there are poor, starving people, their *inkhundla* (community centre) has modern facilities such as electricity and a telephone. This shows a misappropriation of funds because food is an essential need as opposed to electricity and telephone facilities. The message from the singing and chanting stresses that there is a problem which concerns the whole community:



*Yindzaba yetfu sonkhe*  
(This concerns all of us)  
*Sisemphini –imphi yetfu*  
(We are in a battle)  
*Yetfu tsine labagulelwako*  
(The battle is for us who nurse the ill ones)

As the chant continues, one of the characters begins to speak and suggests that they go to get help from the king indicating the culturally nourished dependency of the people:

**Man:** *Sinenkinga phela lapha. Vele kumele siyewembula injubo enkhosini.*  
(We have a problem here. So we have to go and strip a blanket off the king)

*Kwembula ingubo enkhosini* (Stripping a blanket off the king) is a *SiSwati* idiom for making an appeal or seeking help from the king. Normally when people have failed to settle their disputes amicably, the one who feels unfairly treated goes to ‘strip a blanket off the king’. In the past people used to walk long distances from their communities to go and ‘strip a blanket off the king’, but with modern living, people take buses or drive.

One of the characters points out that going all the way to the king’s residence will be a waste of money and therefore suggests that they telephone the king although such practice is not customary. When going to the king to ‘strip a blanket off the king’ people do not go empty handed, but must produce their *tetfulo* (gifts to honour the king). Evidently, those who contact the king by phone avoid the *kwetfula* (gift giving) custom. What the young people bring into their play here illustrates combining customary practices and non-customary ones, resulting with the hybrid nature of Swazi society. People accommodate this hybridity when it suits them. However the conservatives of Swazi culture maintain that this is wrong<sup>122</sup>. When the messengers phone the king at his residence, they are told that he is abroad carrying kingly duties. This raises another problem, because according to custom, the king should not leave the royal residence often, but send messengers whenever possible.

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<sup>122</sup>It is such hybrid practices that gave rise to the radio programme, *ngabe ngiko na* (is this it)? The programme was started by the Traditional Governor, Jim Gama before he was promoted to his royal position.

This part of the play demonstrates the community's dependency, whereby they include the king in all their problems even when they could be resolved at community level. The youth regarded this behaviour as abuse of the *kwembula kwengubo* custom which is used to take to the king issues that the people have tried and failed to resolve at community level.

When the community hears that the king is not even in his palace, but out of the country, they start singing and chanting again. The song says that the people will not be able to eradicate HIV because of frequent travelling and wasting of money. This song indirectly blames the king for his frequent trips abroad, and implies that it is his love for travelling that makes him to travel. The song implies that the HIV/AIDS pandemic can be curbed if the king would stop travelling, giving the money saved to communities to deal with the problem. The words of the song, however, challenge everyone to be alert that the virus 'war' is approaching and may strike anyone. The challenge is for everyone to prevent the virus from 'entering the gates':

**Singing:** *Ngeke lisaphela leligiwane. Sesangenwa yimali*  
(Therefore this virus will not be finished off.  
We are too engrossed in money)  
*Nansi imphi, iyeza nakuwe!*  
(Here comes war, it is coming to you too!)  
*Asiyivimbe ingangeni emasangweni!*  
(Let us prevent it from entering our gates!)

As the singing and dancing go on, all of a sudden, one of them shouts:

**Man:** *Yini le? Iphetseni lenja?*  
(What is this? What is this dog holding?)

### **5.3.2 A new theme is raised: The practice of 'baby dumping'.**

One of the characters comes crawling on all fours like a dog. It is dangling something that looks like meat from its mouth. It is a foetus. The dog runs off to hide in order to eat the 'meat' in a safe place.

**Community:** (shouting *Yivimbeni! Yivimbeni!*  
(Block it! Block it!))

Then the community breaks into a song about the corruption that has invaded the land:

*Imphi ingene bo. Ingene!*  
(War has entered. It has entered!)

After the song, one of the men shouts, "It's a baby!" drawing the attention of everyone to the dog. The whole community shouts and one of the men addresses the audience asking them what this means.

**Man:** *Kushoni nje konkhe loku?*  
(What does all this mean?)  
*Yimihlolo phela le!*  
(This is an abomination!)

As the play continues, some of the members of the audience also join in making exclamations and hand gestures that show their revulsion and dismay. Some of the characters, playing the young men and women complain about corruption and shout that the 'culprit' has to be punished. But who is the 'culprit?' The 'culprit' in this case, is the woman who has 'dumped' the baby. Some women angrily volunteer to go and search for her in the village. This part of the play stirred the audience and some of them made murmurs which showed they were familiar with what was enacted. The chief intervenes:

**Chief:** *Hhayi bo musani kusolana!*  
(No accusations!)  
*Asisifune ngekuthula lesigangi*  
(Let us search for the culprit peacefully).

The *emaphoyisa emmango* (community police)<sup>123</sup> hurry to report the incident to *labadzala eLudzidzini* (the elders at the king's residence), but others shout that the king is abroad.

**Community:** (shouting) *Hheyi akekho laveni lowo!*  
(Hey that one is not in the country!)  
*UleMalayisa!*  
(He is in Malaysia!)

Normally, a king cannot be addressed as *lowo* (that one) because '*lowo*' (that one) has a tone of disrespect or challenge. The people address the king as *mulomo longacali emanga* (the mouth that does not lie) and also *lomudze kunabo bonkhe* (the tallest of them all), which both mean that his word is final and cannot be challenged and he is not answerable to anyone. If he is the tallest of them all, then no one can interrogate him on any matter. This practice, however contradicts the maxim that the king lives for his people, because if he lives for his people he would need to be answerable to them.

As everyone is excited about searching for the culprit and reporting the matter to the king, one of the characters playing the part of a woman from the community soon challenges people in leadership. She suggests that people should stop involving the king in all their businesses and instead start addressing their own problems at community level:

**Woman:** (shouting) *Bonkhosi, asesiyekeleni lokuphekumikisa enkhosini tonkhe tinkinga tetfu. Asesitidzingidze nje tsine ngekwetfu!*

(People, let us stop taking every matter to the king.

Let us deal with this problem, on our own.)

**Man:** *Yebo, kumele siphanye onkhe emakhaya!*

(Yes, we will search every homestead.)

**Community Policeman:** *Mine ngibitwe ngubabe sikhulu ngako nje angeke ngibe khona kuloluphenyo lolu*

(I have been summoned by the chief, so I cannot participate in this search.)

**Man:** *Yeyi buya wena, kute lohambako la!*

(Hey, come back, no one is leaving here!)

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<sup>123</sup> *Emaphoyisa emmango* (community police) are selected men who work within the communities to act as watchdogs for any kind of crime within each community. This concept started when theft of cattle was rife in the 1990s. Their presence reduced cattle theft dramatically in some areas.

The woman who calls the people to stop taking every problem to the king and suggests they start addressing their own problems themselves goes against the trend. As a woman, she would accept what the men and everyone else says, as is the practice and expectation of women generally. She does not comply with that expectation! She deviates and assumes a voice, not just within a gathering of women only, but a gathering of the whole community. What she does shows that she sees herself as a worthy member of the community, who deserves to say what she thinks even though her gesture is unfamiliar to the majority. Another man agrees with her and suggests searching every homestead for the culprit who has abandoned her baby, to show that the community will be taking the responsibility of dealing with their own problems instead of taking them to the king.

The 'community policeman' who tries to escape from the search by saying he has been 'summoned by the chief' symbolises what some Swazi leaders normally do, using the phrase, *labadzala*<sup>124</sup> (the elders) whenever they want to avoid responsibility for addressing a sensitive issue. The policeman says he has been summoned by *babe sikhulu* (chief). The other men tell him he is lying and will go nowhere. They tell him the chief is there with them, so the community policeman has to be present as the community deals with the problem. He succumbs to them and stays.

The community starts singing a song that says weapons and fighting do not help. This song complies with what the *babe sikhulu* (the chief) has suggested: to look for the culprit peacefully:

*Imikhonto ayisizi lutho*  
(Spears do not help.)  
*Imphi ngeyakho wemathand'ukulwa*  
(War is yours, you who like fighting)  
*Kuzofa onjani kusale onjani?*  
(Who will die and who will remain?)

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<sup>124</sup> *Labadzala* (elders) is a collective term for authority that does not have any specific people attached to it, so some leaders use it to avoid taking full responsibility over any issue. No specific name or person is affiliated with the concept *labadzala*, so issues can remain unattended for a long time. No one can question *labadzala* on any issue.

Singing and dancing, the performers search for the 'culprit' who has 'dumped' a baby. The words of the song, *kuzofa onjani kusale onjani* (who will die and who will remain) introduce the idea that there are complications in life where it is not easy to tell who is and who is not, to blame. As they search, the words of the song are a hint that the 'culprit' status may not be as easy to judge as they assume. Before judging any matter, it needs to be critically interrogated.

One of the men shouts that he has found the 'culprit', a girl who had been pregnant, but has no baby. As they bring her to the arena, she cries loudly. Initially, when the community interrogates and insults her, she cries and tries to talk.

**Girl:** *Akusimi ngedvwa lonelicala ... NaSisana watsi babe wakhe walala naye*  
(I am not the only guilty person ... Sisana also told me her father sleeps with her.)

**Crowd:** *Uphi? Uphi?*  
(Where is she? Where is she?)

**Woman:** *Asesidzingidze yanasi sigilamkhuba sikhohlwe ngalesingakwati!*  
Let us deal with this girl and forget what we do not know of.)

The accused girl brings out an issue which no one has been expecting at this stage. It is also an issue which this society dreads to address. Incest is not an issue that is addressed during socialisation. Whenever a girl reports it to the women they discourage her from talking further about it. Sometimes they even ridicule her calling her a liar. This kind of behaviour by women, who stop girls from talking about incest because they themselves fear to face the male culprit results in girls not speaking about incest cases. Through the Theatre-for-Development tool, girls are able to speak about this dreaded issue. It is at a point like this that the identity of the actor and the character are blurred. The actress is playing the *role* of a victimised girl, but also she is playing her own life as a girl susceptible to a similar experience. This is where the effectiveness of Theatre-for-Development as a tool, becomes evident.

When the girl discloses such a serious issue, the performers playing the role of society do not even pay attention to what she says but continue asking where the 'culprit' is. The response of the woman character is also shocking, because she has heard what the girl

said but says that she should not talk about what they do not know. The woman ignores the words of the girl yet they are leading to the root of the problem. One would expect the woman, as a female, to support the girl by listening to what she is saying and therefore know more about the incest case. The Theatre-for-Development workshop situation makes it possible for women to take advantage of the *fictitious* aspect of the play and say what they have within themselves about the wrongs done to them and girls. All too often, however, the oppression women have internalised makes them accept that it is the *right* of men to do what they want with girls and women without any challenge.

To make her point clear to the girl and even earn herself acceptability from men, the woman rushes to the girl and slaps her on her face. The girl resists and holds the hand of the woman as if trying to fight back. She also verbally challenges the elderly woman, which is something young girls are discouraged to do:

**Girl:** *Wentani? Wentani? Ungishayelani vele? Utamshaya yini naye?*

(What are you doing? What are you doing? Why are you really hitting me? Are you going to hit him too?)

**Young man:** *Ucinisile vele! Ngubani lolowakwemitsisa ? Dzadze ngubani vele?*

(Yes she is right. Who made you pregnant? Sister, who made you pregnant?)

The girl asks the woman an important question: is she going to hit 'him' too? The question that one would expect to hear is, who is the man that the girl is referring to here. The woman is not keen on that and it is amazing that it takes a young man to defend the girl whom the crowd regards as a culprit. The young man is interested in the truth. He asks the girl who is the real culprit that is who made her pregnant. In tears and with great difficulty the girl tells everyone that Magolide, the head community policeman, made her pregnant and had said she should not tell. The girl goes on to state that she had only abandoned the baby out of desperation. Again, an elderly woman character comes in to the rescue of the real culprit:

**Elderly woman:** *Yini? Nikhuluma ngani? Tibi tendlu leti! Atikhishelwa ngephandle! Ngako nje akutsi nya! Akutsi swayi!*

(What? What are you talking about? This is house dirt  
We cannot sweep it out. Hush. No more!) *[Silence]*

**Young man:** *Cha asisabindzi ke nyalo! Kwenele nangakitsi! Kute tibi tendlu la!*

*Akuphumel'ebaleni konkhe bo!*

(No silence! We have had enough. No more house dirt! Let us address everything now!)

Again, within the play, when an elderly woman attempts to silence the girl and keep things as they are, even if the young suffer, it is a young man who insists on change. This shows that change is inevitable! The young men are tired of watching young women and girls suffer. What affects them also affects the young men, although, indirectly, because the girls abused by old men are eligible lovers to the young men. Also, the young men tend to emulate their fathers when they have grown up, resulting in society's continuous damage, so, the sooner the young people react to the immorality of the men the better.

At the end of the play, the actor playing the part of the chief changes his part and assumes the role of chair person as the community engages in an actual discussion. They begin a dialogue about the issues from the play including 'baby dumping,' incest, silencing of girls, the king's unending trips overseas and electricity and telephone facilities in *tinkhundla* centres whereas there people are very poor and need more essential things than electricity. Holding a discussion that includes these issues is a way of breaking the culture of silence among the people. As part of the culture people tend not to discuss any issues that expose the shameful deeds of people in positions of authority, both at family and societal levels. Sometimes the people lay the blame on those in subordinate positions in order to protect the image of those in authority, and if that is not possible they simply remain silent about the issue. This is keeping *tibi tendlu* (house dirt) within the house.

In performances everywhere, Bheka Mziyako, the Youth Programme Officer at FLAS confirmed that the community members who had come to watch the play engaged in the dialogue as if the incident was real. Some of the young women became very angry and blamed old women for saying issues should not be addressed. The anger revealed that the silence regarded as a way of life by the people did not favour everyone equally. It had to be discussed. In almost all communities the participation of the audience was notable.



### 5.3.3 Critique of the FLAS Theatre-for-Development workshop

The FLAS Theatre-for-Development workshop was an influential development exercise in the country which brought together young people from all the regions. It was a success in that it enabled young people to work together, although coming from different communities. It was a sign of development for the youth to learn the skill of corporate playmaking and improvisation to address serious issues found in their communities. It was a big development for the youth to even play the act of a challenging criminal practice done by some adults in positions of power, such as men who sexually abuse their daughters and get away with it by threatening the girls if they tell anyone about it. Their choice of the character of a community police to be the culprit who made a young girl pregnant was a direct challenge to people in positions of power such as teachers, business people, government officers and ministers who abuse those under their authority in various ways including the very act of sexual abuse shown in the play.

It is a strength that the play exposes the weakness of communities which fail to address their cases at community level and seek external help such as from the king or the government to deal with issues they could address on their own. However, the play also attempts to address too many issues simultaneously and this weakens the Theatre-for-Development workshop process by lacking focus and failing to deal with issues fully. The play lacked focus and gave equal attention to both serious and minor issues. It ends up blaming many people and not showing clearly what the possible solutions are. It is to the play's credit that a young man stands up to support the victimised girl when an elderly woman blames her, but the play does not openly and thoroughly address the problem of women who suppress addressing the criminal behaviour of men.

The play presents a self-contradicting scenario, where the song says *lendzaba yetfu sonkhe* (this issue concerns all of us), and yet the people still believe the solution rests with the king to provide money to fight the virus. This gesture does not demonstrate a community committed to its own development, but one that is looking up to authorities such as the king and government to provide. The play presents the HIV/AIDS pandemic as a monetary problem rather than an attitude one. Its strong point is that it shows that as

a community, people can identify culprits however, instead of punishing the community policeman who made the victim girl pregnant and the man who sexually abused his daughter, the play jumps to where the chief of the area chairs a discussion of the community problems collectively.

To mark the success of the FLAS workshop, some of the young people who participated in the workshop founded theatre groups in their own communities. According to the ASTG, about fifteen youth theatre groups are registered with the association and the number continues to grow. One such theatre group is at Siphocosini where young people started a theatre group and organised a workshop.

#### **5.4 The Siphocosini youth Group Theatre-for-Development Workshop**

Siphocosini is a semi urban area between the capital city, Mbabane, and Mhlambanyatsi, an urban settlement for the employees of the Bhunya Usuthu Pulp Company, one of the country's biggest revenue makers. Siphocosini itself is semi-urban and looks relatively prosperous but this appearance hides many very poor families.

Like all other parts of the country, Siphocosini has suffered a high rate of unemployment throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. There are many young people who although they went through school later they stay home, unemployed and certainly not in any institute of higher learning due to lack of parental funding or to the highly competitive nature of scarce government scholarship. Those out-of-school young people find themselves caught in the problems of poverty and boredom.

##### **5.4.1 Background to the Workshop: a step forward**

As apathy began to be unbearable for some young people in Siphocosini, three young men, Nhlanhla Motsa, Mduduzi Mdluli and Sifiso Mamba, came together, analysed the situation in their community and decided to form a youth association which they named Siphocosini Youth Association. The members of the association came from all six sub areas of the Siphocosini chiefdom, namely, Ncabaneni, Sithobela, Embo, kaNgema, kaSpete and eNdoli. Their objective was to engage young people in worthwhile activities

such as drama in order to entertain themselves and the community, whilst creating a forum in which to address important issues in their lives. Their main objective was to consolidate and advance youth action in the fight against poverty and HIV/AIDS and peer-pressure. Motsa and his counterparts took time to bring young people together to analyse the situation in their community and realized that many things were not right.

In an interview,<sup>125</sup> Motsa says that the young people of his community were bored. Such people think poorly of themselves as they find nothing worth doing available in their vicinity and often resort to drugs, alcoholism, theft and 'gangsterism'. They do these destructive things because they have a very low image of themselves. They focus on their state of being unemployed and on having no qualifications and conclude that they cannot achieve anything worthwhile. As well as this, within the Swazi context, they regard themselves as helpless because young people do not have a voice, but receive orders from parents and must obey without question.

Motsa and his friends used their imagination and visualized a possibility for change. They imagined things getting better in their community. They visualized images of a community where young people could make a positive difference in their community. Above all, they *believed* in themselves and the rest of the young people. They visualized themselves taking a leading role in raising the awareness of the community, searching for possible ways of correcting whatever needed correction and pursuing possible ways to make practical what they had visualized within themselves. They took action and mobilised the youth. The young people of Siphocosini grasped the idea of a youth group and a strong sense of ownership of the association grew. Their enthusiasm to do something for their community spread.

They elected a committee and then some of them felt that in order for their association to be well recognized they had to involve their parents. The youth association introduced itself to the community leaders and asked to have a parent advisory committee. When the youth elected their committee members they were already getting into action whereby

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<sup>125</sup> Telephone interviews , 2005 and 2006.

every member is significant within the association. Voting empowered them with the right to make choices and to exercise a certain amount of power and control within their own association.

The community leaders gave them their blessing and introduced them formally to the whole community. The parents supported the idea and said they were ready to participate wherever and however they were needed. In their next meeting the group elected and voted for the candidates they deemed suitable for their parental advisory committees. The parental advisory committee idea was the young people's initiative. This was a strength because people in pursuit of development must take action not wait for someone to bring change. When they voted for their parental advisory committee they were taking their ownership of the association to a higher level. Their act shows that they were aware of their status as young people who would need counsel from adults, but were conscious of the fact that this could not be from just any adult. They made their choices. They defined the kind of adults they needed in their advisory committee. They laid down the qualifying attributes.

Motsa, in an interview, stated that the main feature that qualified individuals to become members of the parental advisory committee was a high level of achievement. The achievements varied. They wanted people who were recognized by the community as people of integrity even if they did not have any material wealth. They also wanted people who had been successful academically, financially and materially. By laying down these qualities, the young people showed that those were qualities they also wanted to possess in life. The Parental Advisory Committee was therefore, going to act as their role models in life.

#### **5.4.2 First major Theatre-for-Development workshop**

In a meeting they held in July 2002, the association decided to take action. Their first major event was a workshop in which they would get training in behavioural change and drama. They conducted the workshop in August under the auspices of the Swaziland

Youth United against HIV/AIDS (SYUAHA).<sup>126</sup> The workshop took place at Siphocosini High School and ran for five days. The participants were fifty young people from all six sub areas of Siphocosini. The facilitators were Vulindlela Gamedze, a theatre practitioner and Hlobisile Tsabedze who worked for SYUAHA. The theatre practitioner focused on how to use theatre for change and Tsabedze taught about young people's behaviour patterns, but focused mainly on behaviour change.

On day one, they explored youth behaviour patterns. The discussion enabled the participants to open up and familiarize themselves with one another. They ended up easily contributing to the discussion and identifying the behaviour patterns of young people. They agreed that young people lacked proper guidance about their behaviour. Due to boredom young people easily gave in to peer-pressure. Among the problematic behaviour patterns of young people were alcoholism, drug abuse and indulgence in sexual relations without any form of commitment to their sexual partners. By the end of the first day, the young people were eager to discuss risky behaviour of young people in depth on the next day.

On the second day, the facilitator from SYUAHA, Clifford Ndlovu led the young people as they discussed risky sexual behaviour of young people. They firstly identified the risky behaviour patterns and the facilitator provided facts about the various behaviour. The most dangerous of the practices was the young people's indulgence in unprotected sex, which also leads to the increase in HIV infection. Ndlovu also showed the young participants some alarming statistical information about the escalating pregnancies among the young women in the country.

They dedicated the third day to examining alternative behaviour. They identified possibilities such as establishing youth clubs. The main one of the alternative practices was to engage in theatre. They agreed that theatre was the best method they could use in

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<sup>126</sup> SYUAHA focuses on changing behaviour patterns of young people. They do this through peer education. They align with the central goals of the HIV/AIDS education strategy in the country, which is to prevent HIV infection.

peer education and to address issues within their community. They felt that the lecture method which had been used by many change agents<sup>127</sup> was becoming irrelevant when compared with theatre.

On the last two days the facilitators focussed on exploring life and taking action. The participants went beyond discussing youth behaviour problems. They all explored the problems affecting the whole community, their causes, and explored the possible ways of addressing them. When the workshop came to a conclusion at the end of day five, the young people said they were ready to take action in each of the six areas of Siphocosini.

Following the five day workshop, the three founders of the association began to implement what they had learnt during the workshop. They invited the young people who were readily available to start working daily on a theatrical performance that would address serious issues within the Siphocosini community. A group of twenty-five young people committed themselves to the work. They deliberated on issues such as time and place, and then agreed to meet everybody in the afternoon for three hours from 2 pm to 5 pm. They negotiated with the authorities of Siphocosini High School and established a space to meet each day in one of the classrooms.

In their early meetings they began with decisions on the language to adopt and decided to use *SiSwati* because the performance would be for the whole community. However, they unanimously agreed that English words and phrases would be used whenever they seemed applicable because in semi-urban communities people spoke *SiSwati* with English words and phrases used in all the time. Next, the young people introduced themselves more fully to one another, disclosing information about their family status, their likes and dislikes in order to establish familiarity and a relaxed atmosphere in their daily meetings. They also practiced what they learnt from their five day workshop, by playing theatre games that enhanced breathing, relaxation, concentration and trust in one another. Developing trust was particularly important as it was being built on relationships

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<sup>127</sup> Change agents in communities are extension workers that include home economists, agricultural officers, health motivators.

outside the usual environments of comfort in terms of peer group, family, community as well as the diversity in interest. They taught one another songs and dances which they were to use in their performances as well as for their own enjoyment in their meetings.

The next big issue on the agenda on the daily meetings was to identify primary issues to address in their performance. Among the issues identified was a lack of communication between husbands and wives, abuse of women by their husbands, child abuse, especially orphaned children, use of children as sex workers, incest, drug abuse, alcoholism and sexual indulgence. They agreed that their list was too long and decided to leave out some and focus on a few of them in order to ensure an impact on the community.

The play-making process was difficult because each of the twenty five young people had an equal opportunity to voice their opinions. Although from the same community their immediate concerns varied according to their experiences in and outside their families. Each person making a suggestion had to give reasons why theirs deserved inclusion in the play. This exercise helped the young people develop skill in reflecting on the values of their society, making judgments and choices of what is good and bad for society. On some of the issues they had to vote in order to move on to the next levels of play making. Finally, they agreed on a story line that would deal with child sexual abuse whilst simultaneously dealing with the HIV/AIDS pandemic prevalent in the country.

Due to the high rate of HIV/AIDS infection in the country when both parents die, many children end up in the care of the siblings of their parents. A majority of the orphaned children are vulnerable in the hands of their so-called guardians, who abuse them in various ways including overworking them, depriving them of essential needs such as food and clothing, or even using them for sex. Using orphaned children for sex is on the rise in the country. Some of the victims are raped by the very people who purport to be helpful yet have ulterior motives. The latest form of victimisation of the orphans however is where guardians 'sell' them as sex slaves to men who are ready to pay for such services. This deal does not mean that the 'buyer' owns the children, but he pays for the sex. Both boys and girls are prone to this kind of abuse. The group, therefore, agreed to

focus on this latest form of child sexual abuse. They thought that dramatizing it might help curb it to a certain extent.

The result of the group's collaboration was the play *Ngentiwa kungati* (I did this because of ignorance). They planned a one day workshop at Siphocosini High School, where the whole community including parents and children from neighbouring schools would attend and participate by watching the play and engaging in a post-performance discussion. The group worked together intensely throughout February 2003, and the performance was scheduled for the 28<sup>th</sup> February 2003. The young people designated one of the men in the community to be the chairperson on the big day. As people arrived a group of primary school children welcomed them with singing and dancing at the request of the theatre group. There were many comments of appreciation for the skilful young dancers as the crowd applauded and even shouted. After this the chairperson introduced the play, referring to it as the main event of the day.

#### **5.4.3 The narrative, *Ngentiwa kungati* (I did this because of ignorance)**

The play is about two young people, Thandi, a girl and her brother, Vusi who have been orphaned due to HIV/AIDS. Their father's younger brother becomes their guardian, but sells both children as sex objects to men who want to pay for sex. Thandi falls pregnant and hides it by always wearing a school jersey and jacket. When her time has come she delivers the baby without the assistance of a midwife. She wraps the baby in her jersey and abandons it. Mahlombohlanya, a clown of the area finds the baby and raises the alarm. He identifies Thandi as the owner of the jersey that wraps the baby. The community starts shouting at Thandi for her 'cruel' behaviour of throwing away her baby. Her uncle accuses Mahlombohlanya of being the father of the baby, but Thandi cries and says she wants to speak the truth. Her uncle looks at her in a cautioning way, but Thandi shouts saying she will tell the truth even if she dies for it.

Thandi tells everyone present that her uncle sold her and her brother as sex workers to a man called James. Her uncle protests and says Thandi is a disrespectful girl who has the audacity to lie about her guardian:



**Babelomncane:** *Sibongo sami salokukugcina; lokungicambela emanga? Nhhe? Wena ntombatana? Ungicalela emanga? Nhhe? Awungihloniphi wena Thandekile?*  
**(Uncle:** Is this the way you thank me for looking after you; telling lies about me? Hey? Hey you girl? You are lying about me? Hey? You do not respect me Thandekile<sup>128</sup>)

The crowd is divided. Some blame Thandi for 'lying' about an old man and others say, the girl should be allowed to speak. As the shouting increases Thandi again starts crying. One of the women speaks and orders the crowd to be quiet:

**Umfati:** *Bekunene aselalele. Mnikeni litfuba akhulume lomntfwana. Sidziniwe kudlalwa bantfu labagijimisa embili kutsi bona badzala nekutsi kumelwe bahlonishwe. Inhlonipho uyitfoli ngekutihlonipha kucala ayimane ititsele etikwakho nje! Khuluma wena ntombatana!*

**Woman:** People let us listen. Give this child an opportunity to speak. We are tired of people who play us by demanding respect because they are adults. Respect is earned by respecting yourself first; it does not just thrust itself on you. Speak you girl!

Thandi weeps but tries to compose herself. She repeats that what she has said is true and that Vusi, her brother, is her witness. Vusi concurs with his sister's statement. Their uncle threatens them and says he is going to deal with their unbecoming behaviour of lying. Thandi weeps more and shouts:

**Thandi:** *Mane nisisiteni tsine bekunene! Sihawukeleni! Babe lomncane uyasigcilata kakhulu. Ufola imali ngatsi. Asifuni kuphila lemphilola lasiphilisa yona. Sihawukeleni bo nebakitsi!*

**(Thandi:** Please good people help us! Someone have compassion on us. Our uncle enslaves us. He gets money through us. We don't want to live the life he subjects us to. Please someone have compassion on us!)

The girl who plays the part of the woman who has spoken earlier shouts again saying that the children do not even have to ask. She states that it is a shame that a girl had to even fall pregnant before the two male criminals are caught. As she talks some of the young people playing the part of the community pounce on the children's uncle and start beating

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<sup>128</sup> Thandekile is the longer form of the name Thandi.

him up. He cries out saying he did not know what he was doing, but the community continues beating him up saying they want to teach him a lesson together with any other individual who anticipates doing what he has done. The woman shouts again telling the mob not to spoil the case. She states that he should face criminal charges together with his friend who has been paying him to sexually abuse the orphaned children. The play ends with a songs and dancing of *ummiso*:

*Maye mine bengingati*  
(Oh my, I did not know)  
*Maye ngentiwa ngulokungati*  
(I was caused by my ignorance)  
*Maye mine ngadzinga batjeli bo*  
(Oh my, I needed people to tell me)

#### 5.4.4 Post Performance Discussion

The play proved to be very sensitive and brought back painful memories for some members of the audience who could not contain themselves but made utterances such as ‘*emhlabeni* (Oh, this world!)’ This could either refer to the problem of the death of parents due to HIV/AIDS or to the abuse the children went through. The chairperson asked if what they had just seen was the way society had to be, saying ‘*ngabe ngiko yini kambe loku* (Is this the correct way to go?)’

Many people raised their hands to respond. One woman from the audience said it was sad that what had been dramatized was actually happening in communities in the country. A young man, also from the audience shouted and said “*hhayi nje laveni, kodvwa khona la, mmangweni* (not just in the country, but this very community!) In response to this comment, the chairperson advised the audience not to direct any comments towards specific communities or individuals but to discuss the issues from the play. The chairperson’s comment raises a concern to me which shows how even during a Theatre-for-Development workshop some of the leaders interfere with the reaction of the participants by trying to influence their judgements. This demonstrates the fear that binds people who are engaged in the struggle for change. Although some people would like change to occur, they fear to be the ones leading in activities geared for change. What the

chairperson did showed that he feared to be quoted as the one chairing the function where some of the wrongs of society were exposed. He preferred making it sound general and not a specific issue that prevails in their community.

The participants did not adhere to the chairperson's caution, instead he enraged them more. Some of the young men shouted in a light hearted way saying if there were such people in the community they would like to lay their hands on them. Many speakers indicated that it was an abomination for orphans to be utilised as income generating objects, calling them *tindla ngato* (sources of what you eat). Others spoke strongly against the pretence of 'helping' orphaned children just in order to abuse them. A young school girl from the audience asked what children who find themselves in situations similar to Thandi and Vusi's should do. In response, one woman said that children should report any form of abuse at least to their teachers at school, so that their cases could be addressed without subjecting them to further victimization by their abusers. In response to the woman's comment a number of women raised another issue which was a problem and said young people needed to be careful who they talked to because abusers were found among teachers too.

From the discussion it became clear that although pressing criminal charges against abusive men like the two in the play was the right thing to do, in real life situations it was difficult for young victims to speak out against their parents and guardians. Some of the women said that dealing with this kind of problem would require the commitment of the whole community towards the exercise, because no woman or child could disclose information that incriminates their authority and still live under the same roof.

The play showed the community members a clear reflection of their life coupled with the undesirable elements of the community. Their identification of the abuse of orphans and children generally made the community members visualize the possibility of challenging the wrong-doing to a point of making corrections whenever possible. They started to realize that the problems they had always regarded as impossible to address could actually be identified, challenged and addressed publicly through Theatre for

Development. This could extend even to challenging the very Swazi culture which does not permit young people to challenge adults regardless of the situations at hand. From the play it was clear that a majority of adults abused the respect<sup>129</sup> which young people are encouraged to have for them.

#### **5.4.5 Analysis of the Workshop**

Theatre-for-Development is a tool that helps people use theatre to examine their lives and also explore possibilities of dealing with issues and challenges in their lives. Most of the documented examples of Theatre-for-Development within the African continent demonstrate examples of theatre practitioners who worked with communities dealing with issues in their communities. What I found with the Siphocosini workshop differs from other examples in that, the founders of the association and participants of the workshops thereafter were the very community, and were people who refused to embrace a victim mentality. They realised they were in a desperate situation of unemployment, poverty, boredom and lived in a community that suppressed addressing serious issues under the guise of respect for elders. They then started exploring to identify ways which could help deal with their problem.

By taking the initiative in dealing with the problems in their community, the Siphocosini youth deviate from the 'traditional' Swazi way of thinking of maintaining silence regardless. Whenever there is a communal function in communities where government officials are present, it is the tendency of community representative speakers to make requests to government to salvage the communities by bringing about positive change in various forms. However, the Siphocosini young people believed they could take the initiative and bring about change in their own community. To a limited extent they did not subscribe to the prevalent dependency mindset which the FLAS workshop play showed where the people wanted to seek help from the king before attempting to do something about the problem in their community.

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<sup>129</sup> Young people in Swaziland can show their respect for adults by not challenging them in anything they demand.

Although children and young people are generally not allowed to speak when adults are present, the Siphocosini young people assumed a voice, firstly, by establishing their drama group which is a youth voice on its own, and secondly, by presenting the voice of oppressed people within the play *Ngentiwa kungati* (I did this because of ignorance). The group also reinforced the struggle for change within the fiction of the play where the two orphaned children speak out publicly about their sexual abuse predicament.

In the play the disadvantaged young people are dependants of their uncle, their 'guardian.' Paradoxically, the children who are supposed to be supported by their uncle are the ones who 'support' their uncle's family. They are forced to have sex with a man against their will. Their uncle commits a criminal offence. The children's status as orphans is already an emotional trauma. Coupled with the sudden change as they start lacking what their parents had been providing for them the uncle makes the situation worse by the abuse he subjects them to. The mob falsely accuses Thandi of being a culprit who makes herself sexually available to men and then abandons her baby, which adds to her trauma. This is what helpless children with no one to turn to find themselves experiencing. Without addressing such issues which prevail within communities, no authentic and total development can be said to take place.

Thandi's story is very common in Swaziland where many girls abandon their babies because they do not have means to support them. Some of the fathers are respectable men who have the means to support them but choose to threaten the girls and order them not to reveal who is responsible. They do so in order to protect their reputation, positions at work or their marriages. They may pay the girls a small sum of money to keep them quiet but also make life threats<sup>130</sup>. Most girls reluctantly comply.

Thandi's situation is complex because she is an orphan and the adult figure whom society regards as her guardian is her chief oppressor. She has to keep quiet to 'protect' her two male oppressors: her guardian and James, the man who pays her guardian in order to

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<sup>130</sup> An example of these life threats is found in the short story "*Sitayicela ivutsiwe*" (we will find out) in the short story anthology *Emagama ekutjehwa*. The Times of Swaziland also has had numerous such stories (Times of Swaziland Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2005)

sexually abuse her. The easy way for Thandi would be to remain silent and take the blame from society, but to maintain her status as her uncle's dependant. However, even in her desperate position, Thandi makes a choice. She decides to speak out and she does.

When Thandi decides to reveal the truth about her oppression she deviates from society's value of keeping *tibi tendlu* (house dirt) within. Thandi's decision to expose her uncle's criminal deed is a strong weapon that society could employ to prosecute men who commit this kind of crime. This could also prevent other men doing, or anticipating doing the same, fearing the possibility of exposure and imprisonment.

At the end of the workshop, community members saw their socially constructed norms and values differently and saw the inevitability of reviewing some cultural values. For example, the fact that an adult's voice is always the credible one deserving to be heard needs to be corrected. In this society, if a young person has to speak publicly, it is not supposed to be in contention with an adult. The play provokes society to rethink this. The workshop did not solve the problems but exposed numerous possibilities of dealing with cases similar to the Siphocosini community as well as the entire Swazi society.

The punishment the community gives the culprit by beating him weakens the communal effort of identifying the culprit because they attempt to correct wrong with wrong, which is also an act of injustice. This complies with the common practice of mob justice by Swazi people which they call *mbayiyanism*<sup>131</sup>. It is only the woman character that corrects this behaviour, stating that what the man has done is a criminal case and deserves to be dealt with seriously through prosecution in a court of law. What the woman suggests would effect some change in society because criminal offenders would be aware of the consequences of their behaviour. Overall, the Siphocosini workshop was a success and advanced to a higher level than the previous ones.

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<sup>131</sup> Mbayiyanism is a term the Swazi people coined following the killing of a man called Mbayiyane by a mob in the 1980s when people opted to mob justice because they felt the judiciary system delayed to deal with culprits.

### **5.5 Zibonele Theater-for-Development Workshop: *Asicocisane* (Let us talk)**

Another youth group that took Theatre-for-Development seriously was in the Northern Hhohho region, in Zibonele, an area within the Mhlangatane *inkhundla* (constituency). A group of young people came together to establish a theatre group in order to enact issues deemed important in their community.

#### **5.5.1 Background to the workshop**

Mhlangatane is a rural area in the Northern Hhohho region of Swaziland. The people of the area live by farming. When the climatic conditions are favourable the harvest is very good, so, although Mhlangatane is a rural area, the community is not necessarily a poor one as is the case in a majority of rural areas of Swaziland. The most popular crop is maize, the staple food of Swazi people. When there has been good rain in summer, there are plentiful supplies of food throughout the year. People sell the surplus and send their children to school with the money they receive.

When the country was hit by a severe drought in the 1990s, life changed drastically for the community. The people continued ploughing and planting their normal crops, but there was a very poor harvest and for some, none. The Disaster Task Force of Swaziland in collaboration with the Swaziland Red Cross sought for help from *tinini tenkhosi* (the king's friends), as the Swazi people refer to donors from outside countries, especially overseas.

In 2004, the European Community of Humanitarian Organization (ECHO) responded through the Finnish Red Cross. They provided food aid that The Swaziland Red Cross had to distribute for a period of nine months to the communities mainly affected by the drought. Meanwhile the Finnish Red Cross was preparing farming input into Swaziland. The input included providing the people with drought resistant seeds and crops. They had a special brand of maize, *jugo* beans, and cowpeas seeds and *emacembe abhatata* (sweet potatoes leaves) ready for planting in drought areas. They also provided pesticides to assist the people. Whenever there is food distribution, people attend in large numbers, so

the Swaziland Red Cross strategically used the day of food distribution in each area as a day when they would disseminate information about HIV/AIDS to people.

#### **5.5.2 The Swaziland Red Cross Theatre-for-Development Workshop at Zibonele**

The Swaziland Red Cross liaised with its youth volunteers in the Zibonele area, who were already established as a drama group and who had previously been involved in Theatre-for-Development workshops. The association scheduled the workshop to cover a period of nine days, prior to participation in the performance of the whole community on the food distribution day.

Larry Mhlanga, a theatre practitioner from the ASTG facilitated. The first day focused on discussing the theme of the workshop: HIV/AIDS. The facilitator began by leading the participants in an evaluation of their previous training workshop. He also informed them of the death of Thabile Dlamini, one of the theatre practitioners that had been very active in workshops. They observed a moment of silence in her honour. The young people felt that much as HIV/AIDS was important, there was also a need for parents to engage in dialogue with their children about general life issues. They felt that if the parents-children communication channels were not open, the HIV/AIDS knowledge would not be implemented appropriately. They all agreed therefore that the HIV/AIDS theme in their play should be contextualised within the importance of communication within families. By the end of the day they had suggested many story lines and were in good spirits, eager to begin again on the following day.

On the second day, the young people tried out ideas, rejecting some and accepting others. They agreed that child sexual abuse was rife in society, yet no one seemed to be willing to talk about it. The main problem that the young people voiced was that they were encouraged - and sometimes even forced - to respect and comply with the demands of adults without any question or word of resistance. They felt that respect for adults was good, but problems arise when young people are not allowed to question or resist their orders. Such demand assumes all adults to be respectable and full of integrity. They pointed out that when young people experience problems from irresponsible and



dangerous adults such as molesters, they have no one to tell because not only are they discouraged from having conversations with adults but also from even being present when adults are in conversation. The participants agreed that the play had to highlight the problems of lack of communication between adults and youth. The play would feature the case of a trusted adult that is not worthy of that trust. There also had to be an HIV positive man who rapes his niece without any one knowing until after his death. By the end of the second day the participants had the story line. They called their play: *Asicocisaneni* (let us talk).

### 5.5.3 The narrative of the play, *Asicocisane* (let us talk)

In the story *Babe*<sup>132</sup> Dlamini and LaSibiya are happy and engaged in jovial conversation, but when their daughter, Angel comes to talk to them they chase her away and tell her to go to other young people. Each time Angel wants to talk to her parents they chase her away without even checking what she wants to talk about. Angel tells her friend, Zodwa that she has a problem with her parents who do not allow her to talk to them. Zodwa tells Angel that there will be a community meeting organized by The Swaziland Red Cross at *emphakatsini* (the Chief's residence) where the people hold their chieftom meetings. Zodwa tells Angel that her parents told her that the meeting is about communication between parents and their children on issues related to HIV/AIDS.

Angel and her parents go to the meeting. During the discussion, *Babe Dlamini* interjects and disagrees with the idea of communicating with children about basic facts of growing up. After the meeting, Zodwa and Angel walk home together and reflect on the proceedings of the meeting. Themba, Angel's boyfriend joins them, and Zodwa leaves them. Themba tells Angel that he thinks as lovers they should also discuss HIV/AIDS related issues. Angel has something bothering her which she has wanted to tell her parents when they chased her away. She is hesitant about telling Themba about it because in the past she spoke about her problem to her last boyfriend, Markey, and he left her. Themba realises that Angel has something bothering her. He persuades her to tell him about it. Finally, Angel tells him that she was raped by her *babelomncane* (father's

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<sup>132</sup> *Babe* is a *SiSwati* term for father.

younger brother) before he died of HIV/AIDS. Themba comforts her and advises her to go for voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) to get help. She takes his advice and goes. She discovers that she is HIV positive. Her mother finds the paper with the HIV test results. She accuses Themba of infecting her daughter with HIV. Angel's parents are shocked when she tells them that she has never even had sex with Themba but that she was raped by her *babelomncane*. The story ends with the bewilderment of the Dlamini couple.

On the third day the facilitator, led the group in warm-up exercises for the day by playing games that made the participants relax and gain a sense of trust and belonging to the group. After this, they composed new songs which they would fit into the story. They made the words of the songs and fitted them into existing folk song melodies.

The first song was *Sal'ulalandela weMandela* (Follow, hey you follower):

*Salulandela*..... (Follow then)  
*WeMandela*..... (Hey you follower)  
*WeMandela*..... (Hey you follow)  
*WeMandela*..... (Hey you follower)  
*Salulandela*..... (Follow then)

This song was special because of its rhythm that made it easy for the *Sibhaca*<sup>133</sup> and *kutsamba*<sup>134</sup> dances to accompany it.

The participants made up another song which served as a cry by young people to parents. Normally, children make requests to their parents through their mothers. This song is a plea by young people to both parents for dialogue but it directs the plea particularly to the mother:

<sup>133</sup> *Sibhaca* is a dance for men where the women assist in singing only: see chapter 3.

<sup>134</sup> *Kutsamba* is a dance for women, where they shake their bodies as they dance: see chapter 3.

*YeMake*..... (Hey mother)  
*Asicocisane*..... (Let us talk)  
*Thina singabantwana*..... (We are children)  
*Siyafunda*..... (We are learning)

After putting the words of the songs together they started rehearsing the play, the songs and the dances. They managed to go through the play fully once before the day ended. On the fourth day they went through the play several times because the songs and dances were already composed.

On the fifth day as the group was rehearsing one of them suggested that it was inappropriate to do only the traditional dances. They all agreed that contemporary dance should be incorporated into the play. It did not take long for them to come up with appealing contemporary dance styles. Their dances included assorted body movements that suited the rhythm of the songs and could not necessarily be categorised under any specific type of dance. This also signifies the hybrid nature of the arts in Swaziland.

On the sixth and seventh days at rehearsal, some participants acted out the role of the audience. The characters asked the audience questions which could be answered in a variety of ways. Angel asked the audience if she should tell her boyfriend about her problem. The actress playing Angel practised how she could take the play on if one of the audience shouted "Yes tell him", but she also practised what the next move would be if someone from the audience shouted back, "No, don't tell him. He, too, will reject you! The actress also had to be ready for a situation where the audience would ask 'What do you personally think?' or where they would keep quiet and not respond to her question at all.

Part of the training in this workshop was to equip the participants with the skill of improvisation, vital in Theatre-for-Development. During the rehearsals on days six and seven the participants learnt improvisation because the facilitator made them aware of the importance of responding in ways that would comply with various responses from the audience. The young people responded with confidence, and they gave one another

opportunities to speak clearly in response to each speaker's statement. When they acted parts symbolising the community's anger against the abusive characters they sometimes shouted at the same time causing confusion, but they solved that by collectively selecting those of them who had the most convincing responses to be the ones to take the parts.

On the eighth day it was the dress rehearsal, and finally, on the ninth day, they performed for the donor, the Finnish Red Cross. A representative of the Finnish Red Cross in Swaziland, and some officers from the Swaziland Red Cross came. The performance was at 10.00 am so that at 2.00 pm they could rehearse again before performing for the community on the next day.

The officials were all happy with the performance and agreed that the message of the play was appropriate to HIV/AIDS. Some appreciated that the play was more engaging to the audience than just 'preaching' the message. A few issues were highlighted about the play and they needed to be addressed immediately because the main performance was on the next day. The young actors had not done the Swazi dress code well. One woman told the youth to pay special attention on how to put on their traditional costume. She also explained to them how the opening side of the *emahiya* is done differently for boys and girls.

During the showcase there was also a representative of the community who explained issues of protocol in the community. He told the young people that in social gatherings *libandla* (the people in the meeting) sit down first before the chief comes in. Somebody gets the chief and sits him down respectfully. He demonstrated to the men how if they are wearing their *emajobo* (loin clothes) they must sit down by throwing back the back section, unlike simply sitting down like men wearing trousers. A woman also demonstrated to the girls how they should sit down, taking special care to keep the knees together. The purpose of these interventions was to teach the young people how to wear their traditional dress appropriately and impress the traditional leaders who were to be there.

The facilitator assisted the cast in making all the necessary corrections and adjustments, especially with the costumes. All the rehearsals were done indoors, at Zibonele Pre-School yet the performance was to be outside, so Mhlanga reminded the cast about projecting their voices to reach the audience. Although in the Swazi society leaders and the general adult community are particular about how youth present cultural matters, I consider it success for the youth group that their 'visitors' only intervened with costuming rather than the issues in the play because that could defeat the purpose of the workshop.

#### **5.5.4 Food Aid and Performance**

On Saturday, people came very early to the assembly point as is the case whenever food aid is to be distributed. The *libandla* (people in the meeting) sat down. Thabo Mncina, an official from the Swaziland Red Cross chaired the event. There were important speakers who included a community representative, the *indvuna* (chief's assistant), the chief, a representative of the Swaziland Red Cross food distribution office as well as the Finnish Red Cross. The chief was the last one to speak because Swazi protocol demands that no one speaks after the most highly respected person in any gathering. The performance followed.

The singers and dancers started off with their song *Salulandela weMandela*. The audience liked the dance and responded with great applause as it ended. As the dancers left the stage, Angel's 'parents', LaSibiya and *Babe* Dlamini remained to start the play.

The play properly opens with the scene where LaSibiya and *Babe* Dlamini are in a happy mood and having a light hearted conversation. Angel comes in and sits down by her mother in an attempt to join them. They chase her away telling her to go where the other young people are. LaSibiya tells Angel to go and do some washing if she has nothing to do.

Angel then faces the audience, telling them that she has a problem she wants to share with her parents, but each time she approaches them, they chase her away. She asks the

audience what she should do. Many people shout from the audience giving her different advice including, "Talk to other young people", "What is your problem?" "Ask your mother". Angel then says she will tell her friend Zodwa about her problem. She also tells the audience that she is confused and does not know what to do about her problem. She paces up and down on the arena. One member of the cast that is sitting in the audience asks out loud, "What is your problem? We cannot give you advice if we don't know what your problem is!"

Angel responds to that question by telling the audience about how her *babelomncane*, who later died of HIV/AIDS, raped her. She says that in her confusion she told her boyfriend Markey about this, but he rejected her right away, calling her names. She also says she tried to tell one of her aunts who warned her never to say a word about the matter, saying it was *tibi tendlu*. As Angel speaks, her friend Zodwa approaches. Angel takes a deep breath, like a sigh, turns away from the audience and faces her friend who taps her shoulder as they greet each other. Zodwa asks Angel what is wrong and Angel tells her about her problem. Zodwa tells her that there will be a Red Cross Community meeting whose theme is communication between parents and their children. Zodwa had been told about the meeting by her parents who will come along with her. The meeting will be at *emphakatsini* (the chief's residence). Angel tells Zodwa that she thinks her parents are also going to be there because if a chief calls a meeting all those who absent themselves are subject to a fine. As the other performers who are playing community members enter the arena for the meeting they sing a song:

<i>Ye make asicocisane</i>	(Mother let us talk)
<i>Tsine sibantfwana</i>	(We are children)
<i>Siyafundza</i>	(We are learning)

When the singing stops, the scene becomes *emphakatsini*, where an official from the Red Cross addresses the community. The young person playing the Red Cross official stands up and tells the community about the need for communication between parents and children. The Red Cross official within the play explains, gives the advantages of communication within families and asks the community to give their opinions about

communication within families. Most of adult attendees agree that within families it is indeed important to communicate with young people. The young person playing *Babe Dlamini*, Angel's father interjects and disagrees with the idea of holding discussions with young people. He leaves the meeting in an angry mood. At the end of the meeting Zodwa and Angel walk home together. When Zodwa leaves, Angel sees her boyfriend Themba, approaching. She asks the actual audience if she should tell her new boyfriend Themba about her rape ordeal.

A woman shouts saying, no, she should not tell him because he too could reject her like Markey did. Another tells her to tell him. Angel shouts louder, saying she is getting more confused about the matter. Following the contradictory views the audience is slow to respond to Angel's plea, and it is only a member of the cast that is 'planted' in the audience that responds to her. The youth group had decided to 'plant' cast members among the audience in order to give life to their play and also ensure that the idea of talking about issues comes out rather than suppressing them as is the norm in this society.

A member of the cast within the audience shouts and advises Angel to tell Themba because if he rejects her afterwards it would mean that he was an unworthy boyfriend anyway. All the time Themba was getting nearer, Angel started to panic, asking the audience what she should do. This time a majority of the audience shouts, telling her to tell him.

In this scene, after a brief struggle and stammering fearfully, Angel tells Themba that something is bothering her. He asks her what it is. She tells him and starts to cry as she relates her ordeal. Themba takes out his handkerchief and comforts her. He advises her to go for Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT). Angel accepts his advice. The majority of people in Swaziland are scared to know their HIV status, so Themba tells her he is proud of her making the wise decision. He starts dancing the *giya*<sup>135</sup> dance before her. He also says his *tibongo* as he does the *giya* dance:

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<sup>135</sup> See the dance part of Chapter 3.

*Hha! Ngadla mine msa wababe!* (Oh, there I win, that's me, my father's son!)  
*Ngadla mine msa welichawe!* (There I win, that's me, a champion's son!)  
*Mine ngatsatsa intfomb 'emishini* (That's me, who took a girl at the mission station)  
*Basala bakhala!* (And left them crying!)

Angel leaves excited and humming a jovial tune. The scene ends with the cast singing the song “*yemake asicocisane*”.

In the next scene Angel appears holding a piece of paper. The cast change their song and hum a sad tune. Angel's mother sees her paper and she snatches it from her. She reads it aloud. She shows it to her husband, reading again, and both of them shout at Angel, blaming her for being a disgrace in the family. They accuse her of sleeping with her boyfriend, Themba. Angel tells them that actually she has never had any sex with Themba. She tells them how the dead *babelomncane* raped her. Her parents freeze with shock. The rest of the cast shout “*Asicocisane!* (Let us talk!)” The cast bows and leave as the audience clap their hands.

After the performance, the chairperson asked the audience what is to be done with Angel's parents. The reactions of the audience varied. One woman blamed Angel's parents for not giving her an opportunity to talk to them when she wanted to, and another woman stood up, defending the parents. The latter emphasized that it was not Swazi culture to discuss with young people. She said young people only receive orders from parents. Following this woman, many people, especially the younger ones, raised their hands. Most argued that culture had to serve the interests of all the people.

Some men said any culture that favoured wrongdoers and covered up for culprits such as Angel's father's brother, was no culture at all. One young woman asked how the problem of older women, such as Angel's aunt, who silence young girls, could be solved. There were however no specific solutions, but the audience's views indicated that they were aware of the social issues in the play. Many speakers suggested a number of possible options to deal with the problems, but most were complicated and could not be settled there and then. The discussion eventually ended and the Red Cross Volunteers distributed food to people.



### 5.5.5 Critique of the Workshop

The young people from Mhlangatane *inkhundla*, like other young people from a few other *tinkhundla* in the country were determined to participate in the development of their own community. They took advantage of the workshop not only to address the HIV/AIDS related issues, as the Swaziland Red Cross required but also brought in issues which they found to be equally important to them. Giving people information about HIV/AIDS is important, but does not help people pursue their development if there are still anti-developmental structures and systems operating within their communities. They decided to deal with the negative structures and systems so that other issues including the HIV/AIDS related ones could then follow.

The young people of Zibonele area examined their situation and identified their main problems which included the lack of communication between parents and their children. As part of their development strategy, these young people decided first of all to challenge the silence imposed on them. They also exposed the results of embracing the '*tibi tendlu*' attitude. The HIV/AIDS message became a secondary issue in their play. The play demonstrated that once communication between parents and children was open, then it would be easier for other issues, including HIV/AIDS related ones, to be addressed.

In Swaziland there are quite a number of agencies that teach people about HIV/AIDS but there are also numerous latent important factors that undermine the efforts of the agencies. These include the fact that communication channels are not open in families between the adults and young people, nor between men and women. As a result of the lack of openness about issues such as abuse, criminal adults get away with their abusive behaviour. The silence that this society encourages among women and young people encourages abuse to go unchallenged. As a starting point, the youth decided to deal with the silence and then deal with issues after the communication channels are open.

When devising their play, the young people chose a girl's character to be the protagonist, thus placing significance on an individual, who is doubly insignificant in this society: an

orphaned girl-child. The protagonist's role in the play gave Angel the voice that this society deprives all young people of, but especially girls. Angel could interrogate society, and was able to wait for swift responses before the play would proceed. When she asked for the opinions of the audience, a delay in their response meant a delay in the play's progress. To a certain extent this reflected the reality of life in the society. Young people, especially girls, have many questions they need society to answer. As long as the Swazi society is quiet and does not respond to the questions and pleading voices, life becomes stagnant and rigid making development impossible. In the play, when the audience answered Angel, the play moved on.

The play ended with the phrase, *Asicocisaneni* (let us talk), and whether society adheres to the voice of the young people or not, is not clear yet because the struggle continues. What is clear is that the young people have broken the silence. Their voice has been heard. Society now knows what the young people need. If the Swazi society decides to ignore the cry of young people, they do so out of choice knowing well what the repercussions of ignoring it means for the development of the country. The *SiSwati* idiomatic expressions *kutala kutelungelela* (having children is the extension of oneself) implies that the future of a people depends on the development and preservation of young people. The workshop was a worthwhile exercise. It enabled the young participants to be actively involved. Although the challenging voices of these young oppressed people are not yet strong enough, this first move is a progressive step within the development process.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

The Theatre-for-Development workshop FLAS organized in collaboration with UNICEF was a success and gave young people the opportunity to make up their own play on issues not previously addressed in the country. Their workshop challenged the long standing silence, which enables adult culprits to get away with their crimes. The play challenges this silence by having a girl who has been sexually abused publicise the fact that she has been abused by a man who is respected in the community. It also addressed the problem of incest which for a long time in Swaziland, has been ignored.

The Siphocosini workshop challenged the idea of protecting adult people who are culprits but hide under the protection of their adult status. It showed that contrary to Swazi belief, there are cases when an adult is wrong and a young person right. The workshop gave the young people the opportunity to decide what issues to address. Instead of simply devising a play that addressed HIV/AIDS and the use of condoms - as the trend was with workshops orchestrated by organizations committed to combating HIV/AIDS - the workshop addressed issues chosen by the young people. The Theatre-for-Development tool made it possible for the participants to discuss issues which could not be discussed under normal circumstances in this society. Discussing the issues required the discussants to be brave and to challenge behaviour that hinders development regardless of who is the culprit behind the unbecoming behaviour. 'Baby dumping' and incest are two of the many serious issues in which Swazi society blames the victim. The young people's choice to address these subjects led to acknowledging some of the hidden facts behind the crimes and made it possible for the young people to address the issues without being personal and referring to people in their community by name.

The Siphocosini workshop arose from the 'grassroots,' as the young people established the group on their own. Similar to the FLAS/ UNICEF workshop, the Siphocosini youth addressed issues that are never addressed openly and gave a voice to the voiceless by giving the role of a protagonist to a character who is an orphaned girl. The workshop also demonstrated the power of solidarity - solidarity of abused people. This shows that even the Swazi women who are abused can take action towards their emancipation.

Theatre-for-Development is about people using dialogue to address issues that concern them. In the Zibonele workshop the young people worked with Swaziland Red Cross, an organization interested in raising people's awareness on HIV/AIDS related issues, but because of Theatre-for-Development's strategy of enabling participants to make their choices, young people decided to address lack of communication or openness about issues. Lack of communication may not be regarded as the main issue to people from communities where it is not a problem, but in the case of this society, the young people

realised that the serious problems facing their community could not be dealt with unless there is a structure established to enable every member of society to voice out their concerns. The play focuses on lack of communication between parents and their children yet its overriding aim is to fight lack of communication among all factions of society including men and women.

In conclusion, I found the youth activities to be a step forward in activities in Swaziland, nevertheless. However important the youth activities may be, they would yield minimal results in bringing about the desired change if the adult community were not involved. The next chapter is an examination and contrast of two types of workshops which involved the adult communities of Swaziland.

## CHAPTER SIX

### From a general to a 'men-only' Theatre-for-Development workshop

#### 6.0 Introduction

This chapter is about two Theatre-for-Development workshops which took place in two different communities in Swaziland. The first is a series that were organized by The Population Service International (PSI)<sup>136</sup> in collaboration with the National Emergency Response Council on HIV/AIDS (NERCHA)<sup>137</sup>. These focused on the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV/AIDS (PMTCT). PSI and NERCHA commissioned two theatre groups to work with communities in all regions of the country. At the end of each workshop there were discussions about the issues raised in the performance. It was from the discussions that the second type of workshop resulted. This one was for men only.

The second Theatre-for-Development workshop was introduced by Modison Magagula through reviving the concept of *kudliwa kwenhloko ebandla* (communally 'eating of a cow's head') following the call for help by women who expressed that men were not committed to the fight against HIV/AIDS. Men in Swaziland are regarded as the 'thinkers' and some are even called *bucopho* (the brain) of the *tinkhundla*. They conduct their discussions in private spaces and the *kudliwa kwenhloko* is a setting where they talk about issues without the intrusion of women and children. The special space set aside for men where women are not allowed is *esangweni*<sup>138</sup>. When men enter *esangweni* to 'eat the cow's head,' they engage in dialogue about anything they consider important. Magagula therefore thought he could revive the *kudliwa kwenhloko* practice and let it serve as a forum where men could address serious life issues, especially the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

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<sup>136</sup> PSI promotes products, services and healthy behaviour that enable low-income and vulnerable people to lead healthy lives. PSI also implements voluntary counselling and testing alongside a variety of educational and behaviour change.

<sup>137</sup> The core objectives of NERCHA are to focus on prevention of HIV/AIDS, impact mitigation, including the care of orphans and vulnerable children and the care of those infected.

<sup>138</sup> *Esangweni* is the place next to the entry into the cattle byre, which is reserved for men only.

## **6.1 Prevention of Mother to Child Virus Transmission workshops.**

As part of an exercise to curtail the transmission of HIV, the NERCHA, through the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare sponsored Theatre-for-Development workshops in the fifty-five *tinkhundla* centres. NERCHA contracted two theatre groups to use Theatre-for-Development to provide people with information about the transmission of HIV from mother to child. The workshops were an exercise that resulted from a collaborative effort by the Population Services International (PSI) and other organizations such as UNICEF. The main idea was to promote Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) of individuals' HIV status in an attempt to prevent the transmission of the virus from pregnant mothers to their babies.

### **6.1.1 Background to the Workshops**

In 2005, PSI conducted a survey in which 1,568 participants from urban and rural *tinkhundla* centres were drawn. The objective was to obtain a representative sample of the rural and urban population per district of young people over 15 years of age. From the survey analysis, it was determined that 80.3% of the 1,568 young people had never gone for counselling and testing. Although above 80% of respondents recognized that going for VCT would have positive benefits, only 27% planned to go in the next 12 months yet at the same time, over 85% of the people believed that they could convince a friend, partner or close family member to attend a VCT site. PSI used this and other information to develop a creative brief to which the theatre groups responded. One of the two groups which were selected was Siphila Nje Drama Society.

### **6.1.2 Involving other organizations**

PSI sought help from other NGOs, private and government sectors involved in HIV related activities to identify the location of VCT services within the *tinkhundla* centres. PSI also asked for assistance from the organizations in providing more improved VCT services to the communities. In turn the organizations agreed overwhelmingly to provide ongoing VCT services. The organizations included the Swaziland Infant Nutrition Action

Network (SINAN)<sup>139</sup> and the Nazarene clinics. UNICEF also became involved in sensitizing people about the importance of using VCT services.

### **6.1.3 Involvement of local leadership structures**

PSI got into the *tinkhundla* through the national leadership structure. The Deputy Prime Minister's office which is coordinating the constituencies was pivotal in making this exercise a success. Firstly, PSI held a meeting with the Principal Secretary in the Deputy Prime Minister's office to explain the objectives of the project. They also called the regional secretaries into a meeting to get social support and mobilization of local leaders. Next, the regional secretaries convened the chiefs, *tindvuna* (chief's assistants), members of parliament and *bandlancane* (community executive committee) in an effort to solicit local access and instil a sense of ownership of the project. As PSI networked with the other organizations the SNDS was already preparing to stage Theatre-for-Development workshops in the *tinkhundla* centres.

### **6.1.4 Workshops: KaBulunga Chieftdom**

I was able to participate fully in a Theatre-for-Development workshop in the one of the *tinkhundla* centres which took place within the kaBulunga chieftdom. As with the others, the aim of this workshop was to raise awareness of the transmission of HIV from a pregnant woman to her unborn baby. The workshop also aimed to show the advantages of Voluntary Testing and Counselling (VTC) and its connection with changes in people's sexual behaviour if a partner is HIV positive.

UNICEF funded the workshop and the programme of VTC. SINAN provided the information about the transmission of HIV from mother to child. The Nazarene Clinics provided the services for people to utilize. Unlike the other Theatre-for-Development workshops which had been conducted in other *tinkhundla* centres, the kaBulunga one involved three primary schools within the community: Nomveshe, Bulunga and Hlane.

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<sup>139</sup> SINAN is the Swaziland Infant Nutrition Action Network that encourages women who have babies to breastfeed.

The schools prepared performances in the form of sketches, songs, dance, praise poetry, poetry and choral music.

The KaBulunga community leaders required the community to provide food. It was for all participants of the workshop, but priority was given to the leaders and guests from organizations and members of SNDS. Although providing food for guests and outsiders is part of the culture, it has an exploitative aspect because people do not do it out of choice because those who fail to contribute are likely to be fined. Inevitably this removes the element of willingness to do something good for an outsider.

#### **6.1.5 Background information about the KaBulunga workshop**

KaBulunga is a rural area in the Manzini region where the Lubombo and Shiselweni regions meet. Although the majority of participants were school children and women, a good number of men attended. Dignitaries who attended included the chief of the area, his mother, the MP of the constituency, UNICEF staff members, the SNDS members, a local pastor, various school teachers and nursing representatives from the headquarters of Nazarene Clinics at the Raleigh Fitkin Memorial hospital. I was present as a research student.

#### **6.1.6 The main performance day**

The venue was the Bulunga clinic. I was there early in order to miss none of the activities of the day. Makhosini Mamba, a staff member from UNICEF chaired the meeting. He announced the names of the schools as the school children arrived into the *inkhundla*. The schools took turns to sing choral music, traditional singing and dancing of various types in order to entertain the early arrivals before the scheduled main events, particularly the theme play by SNDS, started.

In this highly gendered society, even the seating arrangements reflected the hierarchy. Chairs had been placed in the shade of a big marquee, but as people began to arrive most women sat on the grass at the edge of it. The school children also sat on the fringes of the marquee supervised by their teachers, whilst the 'dignitaries' occupied the front seats



inside. However, it was evident that *men* could also occupy the seats! Only when all the men were seated and some vacant seats still remained did some of the women come inside the marquee to sit on chairs. Women, who had come early and sat on the grass where the glaring sun hit most, clearly ranked themselves as the least important members of the community. They only came into the marquee and occupied the seats when specifically invited to.

Mamba, the chairperson asked the local pastor to officially open the workshop with a prayer. He then introduced the community leaders and important people such as the nurses, from the Nazarene clinics, SINAN and UNICEF personnel. The first performance of the day was by school children performing sketches bearing the HIV/AIDS message. Their songs raised the alarm about HIV/AIDS rather than provide information on how to deal with it. They cautioned the people to be 'careful' because HIV/AIDS kills. The workshop incorporated performance and speeches. After the primary school children's performances, speeches followed.

A Mr Gamedze stood up to speak on behalf of the chief. He listed the 'development' which the area had experienced ever since the MP was elected. The achievements included electricity, water and fenced gardens. He asked the MP to enquire why the water level was going down and causing a problem for the gardens. He also requested the MP to ask the government to provide the people of the area with a dam. He thanked the Nazarene church for building a clinic in the area which serves four main communities. The list of requests was long and included the problem of orphans who need to be taken care of, and last but not least he mentioned the problem of pigs which had destroyed their farm produce including maize-mealies and sweet potatoes.

I found it to be a remarkable imbalance and misappropriation of priorities for the chief's representative to place the subject of orphans last in his list; placing an issue of human development after material development, whereas it deserved to be placed in top priority. I take this listing to demonstrate how his society values material development more than issues affecting humans. Gamedze's speech also showed the community had elements of

dependency syndrome in that they expected the government to maintain the water project instead of maintaining it themselves as a project which already belonged to the community. This is also a sign that it is a problem for people to be passive recipients of developmental projects because they tend to lack commitment even in maintaining those projects. From this I deduce that if the community had been committed in bringing about the water project by even contributing money towards it as a community, they would also be committed in maintaining it rather than waiting for the government to do everything for them.

I observed that the community could deal with some of their problems well through a forum within which to engage in dialogue to deal with their problems, one by one. For instance, the people could examine their problem of pigs and identify its root cause. Engaging in Theatre-for-Development could remove the 'blame another' syndrome and replace it with a 'take-action' attitude so that people take responsibility over what affects them instead of looking elsewhere for an answer.

The kaBulunga community had actually become *underdeveloped* by the free provision of projects they got. The problem of gardens which were destroyed by their own pigs was an example of it. Having been provided with pigs and gardens, people had little sense of committed ownership of them. They mostly place value on what they have *earned*, and anything that has been given free has less value. This is the reason why some organizations or donors require at least a membership fee to be paid towards any developmental project in order for the project not to lose its value. Although this community had already been provided with some 'material development' in the form of the projects they had received from donors and the government, they still lacked the kind of development which Harding refers to as "consciousness-raising" (Harding 1998: 5), which leads to "a transformation in one's own self perception that may eventually lead to development of a material sort (ibid).

If members have contributed financially towards a project, the sense of ownership helps them explore ways of dealing with their problems themselves instead of always seeking

external help. People's commitment to their development projects raises their self perception to a level where they realise they are capable of dealing with their problems, and to keep exploring new avenues whenever they face further challenges. Although the kaBulunga community did not initiate the workshop, their involvement gave them some experience of how Theatre-for-Development is used to address issues that concern people within a community. The next speaker after the chief's representative was LaMamba, a nurse from SINAN.

LaMamba explained the HIV prevalence trends using charts, figures and percentages to show that 42.6% of the population were infected in 2004. At this rate she pointed out that the nation risked extinction if no change occurred. The statistical information presented in percentages had no meaning for the audience who had little numerical understanding, but the pictograms and bar charts clarified the point because the differences were easily marked by the number of pictures and what they represented as well as the length of the bars. It was clear that the longer or higher the bar representing infected people, the higher the rate of infected people was that year. LaMamba encouraged the kaBulunga community to use the voluntary and counselling facility that had been provided for them in their clinic. The murmurs that came from the people in the marquee were not very distinct. It was not clear whether the people were alarmed by the reality of the killer disease in the country or they were sceptical about undertaking the VTC exercise. Perhaps there was fear of knowledge of their HIV status as is the trend among the people.

#### **6.1.7 The Play: A tale of two futures**

The next item on the programme was the play by Siphila Nje Drama Society (SNDS). In the centre of the area used as a stage, SNDS had made what looked like a new grave. The play opens with an old woman who goes back and forth wailing and muttering about the fact that people are dying like flies. As the woman wails, talks and walks near the grave pointing at it she states that not only is there a funeral in the community every weekend, sometimes there are even three funerals in the same area within a single week. As she talked there were murmurs among the members of the audience. They were mixed and

showed that some were reminded of their friends and relatives who had died and others just feared the idea of having what looks like a real grave in the arena.

Death is feared and respected in Swazi culture. People do not play with icons of death. Having a grave right in the centre of the arena may be interpreted as *kuphahla kufa* (causing death). The old woman's wailing, followed by that of other characters can also be interpreted as causing death. Such behaviour is taboo, but death has become an everyday occurrence in the country, to a limited extent, removing some of the beliefs and fears about it. As the old woman carries on talking, suddenly, there is a lot of noise. Someone has died. Once the alarm is raised, there is widespread crying. Some of the phrases that one can pick up from the crying and wailing are:

*Hhawu labantfwana;*  
(Oh poor children)  
*Akabone labantfwabemnakabo*  
(Let him look after his brother's children)  
*Akamkabhele tinkhuni bo*  
(Let him chop firewood for her)

The mourners say all these words because a man has died and left a wife and children. Their words indicate that the community expects the dead man's brother to look after the now fatherless children and help the new widow. This is *kumngena* (inheriting her). After all the crying and wailing have subsided the old woman addresses the audience asking them to judge for themselves in the stories that follow.

Magagula, the director of SNDS asserts that when making this play SNDS did not know Motsa's play "Of Heroes and Men". Although written by different people and set at different times, the two plays' feature an elderly woman who alerts the audience to the coming performance, and also invites them to watch so that they make their own judgement. Swazi society regards *Gogo* (grandmother) in every homestead as the harbinger of wisdom and knowledge. By using the grandmother's character the play instantly has the element of authenticity.

The first scene of the main play features two young men who are friends. One of them is a well-known taxi driver who has many sexual partners. These are mainly young women that he lures into his taxi by offering them free rides. The other is a pastor's son. The two men talk about their sex lives. The taxi driver brags of the many women with whom he has had sex. Boasting, he refers to it as '*inyam'enyameni*' (flesh to flesh) style, making it clear that he does not use any condom. The taxi driver represents men who do not use a condom even if they have multiple sexual partners.

The pastor's son does not agree with his friend. His concern is not only with the transmission of HIV but he also wonders why some men have many sexual partners without commitment even when they make the women pregnant. He associates such men to donkeys that destroy a whole field of melons, having a bite on each, abandoning it before finishing it and moving on to others. The two men's discussion of women includes words like *umdlekenya* (a sexually 'used up' woman) and *imtfombi ntfo* (a virgin). Both men say that they would like to marry virgins and have no intentions of settling for a woman labelled *umdlekenya*. The taxi driver says he has to go and meet his girlfriend, whom he refers to as 'the latest catch.'

What these two men do here, grading women and calling them names is typical of the most atrocious elements of behaviour by men who exploit women as sex objects. The names these men use to refer to the women are to do with women who have been sexually exploited, and the horrific part of this is that men are the ones who exploit. Women get into this trap through the mindset society instils in them from childhood that their value is in their having a man in their lives. When a man demands sex, the women give in easily in an attempt to impress the man, yet the same men to whom they have given their bodies are the very ones who reject them and call them degrading names. This calls for women to be the ones who interrogate their situation and identify ways of counteracting what men do to them. Women are the ones who have to label themselves positively according to what they themselves really want regardless of what the men demand of them. This is not an easy task because of the socialisation girls get to always please men, but enactments of stories such as this one serve as eye openers for women

The second scene features two young women by the river. They have washing baskets. One of them tells her friend that her boyfriend is very 'productive' and brings her bags full of groceries. Young woman number two says until recently, she has had no boyfriend ever since her ordeal of being raped by a man called Joseph who had died a few years ago. She tells her friend that her newly found boyfriend has made her pregnant. The first woman also discloses that she too is pregnant. As the women talk, they discover that the fathers of the babies turn out to be the two friends; the taxi driver and the preacher's son.

In the third scene the two pregnant women, who claim to have now been married through the *kuteka* custom decide to go to the clinic for an ante-natal check up. They walk from the acting area to go and sit with the spectators in the marquee, transforming the marquee into a clinic so that those inside become a group of pregnant women at an ante-natal class. This becomes a powerful strategy which enables all the participants of the workshop to take part in the play, as actors rather than passive spectators. It provides an opportunity for attendees to participate and affect the play and redirect its course in a way desired by them.

A woman acting the part of a nurse explains about VTC, and how a baby can be infected and die if one of the parents is HIV positive. The nurse character explains the mechanism of preventing mother to child transmission of HIV. She asks her 'class' questions, and takes care to involve the audience, which has automatically become her 'class' of pregnant women. All have the opportunity to ask questions about the transmission of HIV from mother to child.

In the fourth scene, the two families are back at home. The woman who was raped when young tells her husband, the pastor's son what the nurse has said. He agrees to go for VTC. In the other family, the taxi driver refuses to go for testing and they start arguing. In the heat of the argument he orders his wife to go into the bedroom so that they can have sex. The woman refuses, but he beats and rapes her.

In the fifth scene the pastor's son and his wife go to check their HIV test results, they discover that the man is negative but the woman positive. The man finds it difficult to accept the situation and becomes very negative towards his wife. She asks him why he is changing whereas they had agreed that whatever the test results, they will be there for each other. This is where the drama shows that the HIV test results can be a shock and that couples need counselling to help them adjust. As the wife is pleading with her husband there is a recorded song playing in the background. It becomes louder and the couple disappears from stage. The song is very solemn:

*Kulukhuni, kulukhuni* (It is difficult, it is difficult).  
*Kodvwa Bambanani bo* (However, hold each other).

The song plays several times and the couple return on stage. The man has a smile on his face. He tells the audience that it has taken him a series of counselling sessions to become normal towards his wife again. He tells everyone that they can still live a happy married life by using a condom. He vows to follow the counsellor's advice, and continue supporting his wife in all possible ways.

In the sixth scene, the taxi driver's wife has given birth to a sickly baby. The man's mother suggests that they take the baby to a traditional healer, but the baby's mother refuses, saying that the baby has to be taken to hospital. However, her husband takes his mother's side and they take the baby to a traditional healer who attempts to heal the baby but fails. The baby dies. The baby's mother shouts at her husband saying he and his mother are the ones who killed the baby by refusing to take it to hospital or clinic. She insists that her husband in particular is the one who killed the baby by refusing to go for VTC. She complains that if her husband had been cooperative at least by using a condom her baby would be alive.

What the woman says here demonstrates her limited understanding of scientific facts about the virus and baby conception because the couple would not have a baby in the first place if they used a condom. The idea is also to discourage HIV infected people to

attempt having babies because that increases chances of the woman's dying because of the loss of blood involved during childbirth. The probability of the baby to surviving is also very low.

The seventh scene shows the first family where the woman becomes ill and her husband and mother-in-law care for her until she becomes strong and recovers. The woman knows that she is ill because of her weak immune system and then with the support of her family she changes her lifestyle; she eats a balanced diet and takes more vitamin supplements that are rich in boosting the immune system such as using garlic in her food. She tells the audience that she has joined the HIV positive people's support group where the members share useful information. She has also started taking the Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Therapy (HAART) drugs which the government provides to people who know they are HIV positive. She also goes for regular classes at the clinic where HIV positive women nursing babies are taught how to protect their babies by using baby formulae as well as milking themselves using breast pumps and then warming their milk to the required temperature the nurse and rural health motivator teach her.

In the final scene the pastor's son's family say although they would like to have more children they have decided to have no more because of the woman's HIV status. Their child has grown up and the play ends with everyone celebrating the sixth birthday of the healthy child. Again, all the people in the marquee are automatically at the girl's birthday party. In her speech at the party the HIV positive woman thanks all the people who have supported her and she then advises all the people present at the party to go for VTC so that they may know their HIV status and then live wisely with knowledge. The play credits the family's happy ending to their going for VTC.

#### **6.1.8 Observations from the play**

Swazi people do not use sex related terminology publicly. They use oblique terms such as *lijazi lemkhwenyana* (the bridegroom's coat) for a male condom and *sidziya samakoti* (the bride's pinafore) for the female condom. They call HIV/AIDS *sifo selicansi* (the disease of the sleeping mat), from the fact that it is a sexually transmitted disease. The



'sleeping mat' is used to mean sex. The fear of talking about sex-related issues means that people are ill informed about HIV/AIDS. Many men hate using a condom and this is evident from the taxi driver who emphasizes that he cannot enjoy a 'sweet that is in plastic,' meaning sex using a condom. This is problematic and needs to be addressed.

Women face a problem because although they attend workshops and make efforts to fight the HIV/AIDS pandemic by sticking to one sexual partner and attempting to encourage the idea of using condoms, a majority of men are not co-operative. They neither attend the workshops nor engage in any form of discussion about HIV/AIDS with their wives. The worst aspect of this negative attitude is that most men have multiple sexual partners with whom they have unprotected sex. This includes men who are officially married to one wife.

Another clear problem that the play portrays is in the language of the dialogue of the play, which shows that a woman is regarded as a stranger in her husband's home. This is evident when the taxi driver argues with his wife as she insists that she will not have sex with him unless he uses a condom. He starts referring to the homestead as "*lamtini wababe* (here in my father's homestead) no woman will say a word". He says "*lamabalení ababe utawulalela lami livi* (Here in my father's grounds you will obey my word". These words are a reminder to the wife that she does not belong, so she has to abide by what she is told.

Here, the play also addresses the sensitive issue of husbands raping their wives, which Swazi people do not want to address openly. When the taxi driver's wife shouts back at him, "*Pita uyangidlwengula ngingumkakho* (Peter, you are raping me, your wife?") His mother comes in blaming her for calling him by name, "*awunambita ngeligama embikwami!* (You won't call him by name in my presence!) This reflects the plight of young wives who are left with no one to support them when there are family arguments. The taxi driver's mother getting involved when the couple is having an argument becomes a disturbance which diverts everybody's focus from the main subject of the man intending to rape his wife to the far less important issue of calling him by name in her

presence. The presence of the mother-in-law and of her taking sides with her son makes it difficult for the young woman to confront her husband successfully no matter how hard she tries. Instead of this dialogue being a constructive family affair, it becomes a battle of words where mother and son fight the stranger, his wife.

When the taxi driver decides to marry his pregnant girlfriend and forego all others, he says it in a way which deludes the audience making him appear to be a good man who is changing his behaviour pattern from a 'womaniser' to a family man. The truth of the matter however, is that this man has gone beyond the age when men marry and he is the one desperate to get a 'good' woman to marry. He wants to do this for his own sake. By marrying a woman whom society labels as *umfati wekutsatfwa* (a woman good for marrying), he gets credit as a respectable man. The driver's seeming change of behaviour by abandoning all other girls is a demonstration of how men abuse women by grading them and making them compete for 'appreciation' which leads to marriage. Sometimes earning this status requires the woman to be docile.

Although the play exposes some of the wiles of men on women it falls short of addressing the matter fully because it does not subvert the limited and oppressive mindset of society which makes women feel obliged to compete for a man's 'love'. I also question what is called love here, because the women do not necessarily compete for a man's love but for him to officially make them wives through *kuteka*. To a certain extent the play encourages women not to sexually avail themselves to men but to earn a reputation of being 'good' so that they may gain the status of being married. This further instigates the pathetic mentality of making women preserve their bodies for the wrong reasons. It encourages them to embrace their oppression by men such as the taxi driver. The play rewards men like the taxi driver with wives when they do not deserve them. The play could have done better to have the taxi driver have no woman to marry after being a womaniser for a long time to teach men to preserve their bodies for their wives too.

### 6.1.9 The response

When the audience had the opportunity to ask questions about issues in the play, they were silent. One would expect that after watching such a play featuring oppressed people such as the women in this case, they would take advantage of the opportunity and ask questions in a scenario where their asking would not be taken to be personal. The silence of the women is yet another signifying factor that a woman who talks about the dreaded issues such as the ones I have highlighted from this play, runs the risk of being labelled a rebel or a 'bad' wife. Women therefore chose to remain silent rather than be the ones to talk and be labelled negatively.

The women asked questions such as how a baby can be HIV negative when one or both parents are HIV positive, and also how an HIV positive person can fall very ill and recover again. Staff nurse LaMamba and the woman acting the part of a nurse answered both questions by explaining facts that the play highlights, such as that nursing women have to use breast pumps to milk themselves and then heat the milk for sometime before feeding the baby in order to kill the virus in the milk. They also suggested using infant formula feed as opposed to breast milk if the woman is not confident enough to follow the instructions of purifying her HIV infected milk. The explanation was simplified and comprehensible to the women.

Another issue that was illustrated in the play was that although a woman may speak assertively to an abusive husband instead of simply receiving abuse in silence, the assertiveness is short lived if she lets him rape and beat her and still stays with him. It appears that her assertiveness would only be worth emulating by others in real life if she had undertaken some action that would make her husband change his behaviour. The play however reinforces the idea that a woman should stay in a relationship even if it means risking her life via infection or physical and sexual abuse. This 'victim mentality' does not provide women with any way of dealing with abusive men.

The play was mainly informative about the transmission of HIV from mother to baby, but it did not provide any help for women whose husbands refuse to use condoms. It exposed

the problems facing women without providing any way of dealing with them. It also did not provide any opportunity for people to make constructive suggestions or to come up with possible ways of dealing with problematic situations. In a more interactive workshop, the participants would have been much more closely involved and developed the story line in ways that allowed for other possibilities.

Even with these limitations however, a significant event occurred at the end of the play. After the question and answer session and just before the next item on the programme, a woman raised her hand and expressed a sense of helplessness, saying she has seen that the play is teaching about using condoms but there is no use in the whole thing because women cannot do anything about it if men refuse to cooperate. She complained:

*Kusitani, kusitani vele? Njengoba sibonile nje lomake webantfu lapha bekalati  
liciniso kepha lobabe wachumeka wakhwela watehlela kuye. Kusitani ke vele?*  
(How does it help, how does it really help? As we have seen, the poor woman knew  
the truth but the man went on to do what he wanted with her. How does it really help  
then?)

After the woman's complaint there was a loud murmur among the women agreeing with her. This dramatic intervention brought life into the meeting because lots of women shouted in agreement with her even without getting permission to speak from the chairperson. Mamba, the chairperson had to restore order and ask the women to raise their hands to speak so that they could be heard one at a time. One of the women also complained that men do not even come to developmental meetings and workshops such as that one. She stated that as the play had shown, women get a lot of developmental information but they have no way of using it where two people such as husband and wife have to implement the newly found knowledge. One of the men then stood up and agreed that it is true, "*vele litawufa lelive uma emadvodza atikhweshisa emicimbini lenjengalena* (the land will die if men continue staying away from such events.)" At that point Modison Magagula, the founder of SNDS stood up and said he was taking the blame on behalf of men and he felt it was time something was done to encourage men to be involved in developmental events. Mamba, commented that the leaders could be of help

on the matter, by summoning men to such meetings. A group of school children then sang three songs to wind up the performances:

1. *Mswati ukhulumile*  
*Watsi hambani niyowuhlol'ingati*  
(Mswati has spoken  
He has said go and test your blood)

2. *Nkulunkulu ngiphe sibindzi*  
*Sekuyohlol'ingati*  
(God give me the courage  
To go and test my blood)

3. *Safa yi AIDS!*  
*Asambeni siyohlol'ingati*

(We are dying of AIDS!  
Let's go and test our blood)

The PMTCT program is about people voluntarily going to take blood tests, but this song changes the plea and advice into a command from the king. The king is *mlomo longacali manga* (the mouth that does not lie), so the people have to test their blood as a sign of loyalty to the king rather than a choice they have made on their own. This reflects that the people are used to taking orders to the extent of not examining what their own choices would be in certain situations. When the king, as '*Mlomo longacali emanga*' (the mouth that does not lie) has spoken, the people do not interrogate the cases, but simply obey.

The second song makes a plea to God to give the people courage to go and test the status of their blood. The use of 'courage' indicates that the people dread taking the blood test. They prefer staying ignorant rather than take tests and discover the truth which may turn out to be that they are HIV positive. Similar to the first song, this song portrays the people as helpless. In order for them to do what they have to do they seek supernatural aid. This further reflects the dependency syndrome that prevails among the people.

The last song has hope and states that the people can take initiative, although the situation is bad as people are dying. It portrays a community that engages in an exchange of ideas.

The singer has a valid reason why the people should go and take blood tests. The song shows that it is up to the people to decide how to deal with their situation. Although the song does not say much about the significance of taking blood tests in controlling the death rate of the people, it implies that there is a correlation between the people's living or dying and their knowledge or ignorance of their HIV status. It implies that people who know their HIV status are likely to live longer because they will be aware of their condition and therefore live in a way to boost their immune system more than people who do not know their HIV status would.

The kaBulunga one day workshop ended with food being served to all the people who were there. This created an atmosphere of being a 'community'. All the participants ate the same food regardless of who they were, but the dignitaries were served first and children last. It was remarkable that even during eating time people were still commenting about the play. The main idea was that men need to be involved in such workshops because if they do not, it means that all the efforts are wasted.

## **6.2 Women's call for help!**

PMTCT workshops, similar to the KaBulunga were held in many other communities of Swaziland. Women repeatedly said that men were not interested in talking about sexual issues, especially HIV/AIDS. The women said they had understood all the vital facts about preventing HIV/AIDS, the impact mitigation, the care of orphans and vulnerable children and the care and support of those infected with HIV but above all the need for condom use. Magagula listened to these voices during post-performance discussions and realised that indeed, all the efforts of government, organizations and communities amounted to nothing if men, as the heads of families, were not involved. He observed how in almost all fifty-five *tinkhundla* centres, save Ngculwini<sup>140</sup>, men did not participate at all. In some *tinkhundla* men did not even attend. During the post performance discussion of the Mafutseni<sup>141</sup> PMTCT workshop Magagula agreed with the women that

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<sup>140</sup> Ngculwini is an area in the Manzini region. It is one of the places where the PMCT workshops were conducted. There, the number of men doubled the number of women at the ratio two is to one. There were two hundred men and one hundred women.

<sup>141</sup> Mafutseni is one of the areas of the Manzini region where the PMTCT, workshops were conducted.

in Swaziland *livi lamake lemphofane* (a woman's voice is that of a destitute person), meaning that the voice of women is not taken seriously. He stated that men needed to get together like they used to do in the past and recalled the former practice of *kudliwa kwenhloko bobabe* (eating of the cow's head by men).

By the time Magagula thought of the *kudliwa kwenhloko* idea of men's dialogue in 2005 he had just learnt of the advantages of employing Theatre-for-Development, where the theatre practitioners work with communities in a way that enables people to decide what the workshops focus on. The communities do not necessarily just follow the agenda that an organization had identified. He regarded the persistent cry of women as an important community voice calling out for help and felt that a workshop had to address their concerns. Therefore, in response to what women had identified as the huge gap between their own knowledge and willingness to take sexual precautions and that of the men, he decided to initiate a 'men only' forum, *kudliwa kwenhloko* which would afford men the opportunity to discuss of HIV/AIDS and related issues. In order to conduct Theatre-for-Development workshops throughout the country, employing the strategy of *kudliwa kwenhloko* he would need money, so he applied for financial aid from NERCHA and as his proposal was in line with the objectives of NERCHA he was granted the funding.

### **6.3 The *Inhloko idliwa ebandla* (eating the cow's head) concept**

The concept of *kudliwa kwenhloko* originates from the Swazi practice of slaughtering a cow for their rituals. When someone has slaughtered a beast, men eat the head of the beast. They eat the head communally, and when they do, they talk about any subject, which may include women and sex. This practice came as a convenient way of bringing men together to engage in dialogue about HIV/AIDS.

#### **6.3.1 Men as victims of culture too**

Before expanding on how he was going to conduct the workshops, Magagula and the male members of SNDS deliberated the real issues behind the problem of men's lack of cooperation. The root problem is cultural because from a very early stage in life boys are discouraged from associating with women. Society socialises boys in ways that makes

them despise women. Whenever a boy or man does something that reflects kindness or affection towards other people, especially girls or women, society scoffs at them using negative phrases:

*Bufati* (womanhood)  
*Uyafatita* (you are behaving like a woman)  
*Awusiyo indvodza yalutfo* (you are a good for nothing man).  
*Siyabhuyabhu* (idiot)  
*Siyingayinga* (idiot)  
*Imphuphu* (mealie meal; implying one with no brains)  
*Indvodza yelijazi lensimbi* (the man wearing an iron coat)  
*Wamdllisa* (she gave him a love potion)  
*Wamfaka igobondela* (she gave him a bend over)

When society says a man has *lijazi lensimbi* (an iron coat) the implication is that his wife has bewitched him. These phrases are frustrating to any man who does something either for women or with women. Therefore men tend to safeguard their *budvodza* ('manly image') by counteracting any urge to be gentle and considerate. Whenever a boy or man thinks of doing something good or showing an act of kindness to a woman, a battle begins in his mind, whether to do it or not. This occurs also when a man wants to take advice from a woman as this is also regarded as a sign of weakness (unless the woman is an elderly person). A good number of men abandon good deeds and good advice because they want to protect their 'manly' image from society's ridicule.

Men whom society ridicules this way become demoralised. Some of them give in to their relatives who coerce them to see traditional healers in order to remove the 'witchcraft' from the man. The traditional healer deals with the 'problem' in one of two ways: *uyamhlantisa* (he or she makes the man vomit the object they believe he ate) or *uyamgeza* (he or she cleanses him). If a man refuses to go to a traditional healer for such cleansing, his *lusendvo* (extended family) believes that he does so because of the same *sidliso* (witchcraft potion) his wife gave him. They keep warning him about his wife:

*Utamcancatsa* (will tap on his head)  
*Utawugidza enhloko* (will dance on his head)  
*Utamedzelela* (will despise him)



As a result of the pressure and trouble that stems from showing kindness and loving care for women, the majority of men strive to protect their male image by despising women. Also, when making important decisions many men do not even discuss them with their wives but consult with other men. Zodwa Motsa portrays this kind of dilemma in her play, *The Paper Bride*.

It is with this perspective on women that in part makes men dread going to clinics where the majority of nurses are women. They find it a sign of weakness to sit and listen to a woman telling them what is good and bad for them. They regard the woman as assuming control over them, which is a scenario they want to avoid by all means. Men find it easier to attend meetings if they are summoned by authority, such as when they are summoned by the king at Ludzidzini Royal Residence.<sup>142</sup> This is a serious mistake by men and it cost them their lives and that of their families as indicated in the play at KaBulunga workshop. This is also one of the reasons why the country remains as the leading one in the HIV infection rates in the whole world. The mentality that men ought to earn a prestigious status by controlling their wives and not assuming a position of equal partnership with them is continually costing the country both material and human resources.

Recognising this limitation of men, Magagula therefore used the customary practice of summoning men through *bobabe tikhulu* (chiefs) in their communities. He visited the fifty-five *tinkhundla* centres, randomly selecting chiefdoms from them because of his limited funding. In order to get the men's attention, he used various forms of address including the chiefs' own '*Uyezwa na?*'<sup>143</sup> (Do you hear?):

*Lalela ngikutjele* (Listen let me tell you)  
*Utsi babe sikhulu...* (The chief says....)

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<sup>142</sup> The king summons the nation to *esibayeni* (the royal cattle byre) at his royal residence when he wants to give important national announcements such as promoting or demoting ministers.

<sup>143</sup> Before the coming of the radio and television in Swaziland, important messages were sent to every homestead through *bagijimi* (chief's runners) or other *titfunywa* (messengers) who would shout near the cattle byre saying, '*Uyezwa na?*' before they deliver their message.

This method is still in use in some rural communities. When the chief of an area wants men to attend a meeting, an *umgijimi* (chief's runner) goes from homestead to homestead telling people that they are summoned at the chief's residence. He gives them the date and time. The people know that if anyone does not attend such meetings it is a sign of disrespect for the chief and such a person is eligible for a heavy fine of a cow or money. Due to modern technology, chiefs now summon their people to meetings through the media: television, radio or local newspapers. Magagula used all these possible ways of calling men to their chiefdoms and when the men heard about the workshops they were excited and attended in substantial numbers.

### **6.3.2 Kudliwa Inhloko (Eating a cow's head) workshop**

Magagula and the male members of SNDS, who worked with him on the *kudliwa inhloko* project, bought cow heads and had them ready for the men to cook and eat when they come together. No women were allowed. At the same time, in order to trigger dialogue, SNDS used short plays intended to create scenarios that made the discussion of social issues possible. In my discussion I use two plays that my informant, Stanford Mahwayi, a member of SNDS, gave me.

### **6.3.3 Play Number One**

In the first play whilst every man is seated and focused on eating the *inhloko* meat, two of the SNDS men strike up a conversation whereby the first one starts bragging and says he is a real man, with many girlfriends. He continues to brag that he does not even use the "so-called condom everyone is talking about." The second man then warns the first, saying that what he is saying is very dangerous. He himself has only one woman in his life and they use a condom whenever they have sex. As the two men begin to argue about the condom and sexual behaviour issue, another SNDS member within the group suggests that the other men say something about the issue too:

**Third member:** *Bobabe, ase niyilobole nani lendzaba yamajaha lamabili. Nine nibona kutsini?* (Men, tackle the problem these two men are arguing about. What are your views in the matter?)

After this, the rest of the men speak randomly often in a light hearted manner. According to Mahwayi, in all the workshops they conducted in various chiefdoms, this short play is the one over which men did not agree straight away. Some of the men hated the idea of the condom because they had never sat down and discussed it with other men. The only time they had heard about the use of the condom was through a female voice on the radio or television. Some said worst of all was when their wives brought up the subject, sometimes even having the audacity to actually bring condom samples. Mahwayi mimics one man who did not want to even listen:

*“Nhhe, ini? Umfati ete nekhondomu lamtini wababe? Vele alawule nje? Ngeke sekwentekwe ngabona babe! Kungavuka onkhe eMantungwa....*  
(Ohm! What? A woman, bringing a condom, here in my father’s homestead? Just commanding? That cannot happen! My dead father and all my people the *Mantungwas* can rise from death...!)

Mhwayi asserts that such words were initially very common in each of the chiefdoms. However, after deliberation, taking things very slowly, by the end of each workshop the men viewed the use of the condom differently.

#### 6.3.4 Play Number Two

The second play began in the same way as the first. Two SNDS members struck up a conversation whilst seated with all the other men. In this play, there are two men; one has a daughter, the other a son. The two men seek advice from all the other men. They need advice on what they should say to their son and daughter who are about to marry:

**First man:** *Madvodza, ngiboniseni. Bekatiphetse kahle lontfombatana wami, mane-ke sengiyesaba nganalu lubhubhane lolukhona. Akanotsi uyendza avele atitsele kulelibilako libhodo lanangu umbulalave nje?*

(Men, help me. My daughter has been very good and she is a virgin, but now I am scared because of this pandemic. What if she marries and then finds herself in a boiling pot of the killer disease?)

**Second man:** *Ciniso sibili leli. Nami nginaleyonkinga. Indvodzana yami seyifuna kutsatsa, maneke ngiyesaba? Funa atihlome kulomkhulu sochaka lokukadze afukamela leligciwane!*

(That’s very true. I have that same problem. My son wants to take a wife, but I am scared. What if he lands himself on a big trap that has long harboured this virus?)

Following the second play, men in the various chiefdoms stated that they were in favour of the idea of talking to their children about their future lives. What emerged from the dialogue was that men were aware that there was need to revive social structures and systems which promoted communication among people. Some of these extinct structures and systems included *egumeni* and *esangweni*<sup>144</sup>. The men expressed that through these two structures Swazi people spoke to their young people both at family and community levels. One man even reminded the others that Swazi culture is not as oppressive to women as it is portrayed today because in the past both boys and girls were encouraged to abstain from sex until they were committed to someone they were marrying. The speaker referred to the two youth rituals; *umhlanga* for girls and *lusekwane* for boys.

Through *lusekwane* young men were trained to be strong and render services to the king by bringing new *lusekwane* bushes for the king's kraal. He emphasised that the king's royal byre did not necessarily need any renewing, but the purpose was for the youth to pay tribute to their king. The young men were taught that if they had started having sex with girls their *lusekwane* bushes would wither and anyone with a withered bush had to be punished and ridiculed publicly. As a way of discouraging both boys and girls<sup>145</sup> from indulging in sex without commitment they were taught that having sex is to *kuvula sibaya sendvodza* (opening a man's kraal). Both participants of *kuvula sibaya*, the boy and girl, were punished. The boy's family paid a fine in the form of a cow or cattle depending upon the damage. If the girl fell pregnant, the boy's father had to pay a fine of five cattle. The girl's punishment was in the form of negative name calling, such as *umtalakanye* (the one who has given birth once) and also having less number of cattle when her *lobolo* is paid.

I find it remarkable that the men realised there has been an imbalance in maintaining Swazi cultural practices and recognised that the laws and social structures that had

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<sup>144</sup> See chapter 2

<sup>145</sup> Swazi people normally refer to young men and women as boys and girls.

prevailed had been harsh on women. The men agreed that there was a need to revive what the Swazi people had lost in the socialisation of young men.

The men also highlighted that things could not be reversed to where they were in pre-colonial times because nowadays children have been exposed to more knowledge than they were in the past. One man even said no matter how hard young people can be told to abstain from sex, they will not do so because many of them have already started having sex at an early age. One man said "*kute lokunye madvodza vele abagcugcutelwe ngalo lona lelijazi* (there is nothing else men except to encourage them to use the 'coat' [condom]). Although the man said it in a laughing manner, the other men agreed that using the condom seems to be inevitable. There were a lot of murmurs there with some of the men inevitably saying that it is indeed hard because this condom use thing is like eating a sweet wrapped in a plastic cover.

The men made numerous important deliberations. In most chiefdoms men blamed the coming of formal education and employment, saying these had displaced the people's social structures and systems essential to the Swazi way of life. They emphasized this by using the terms, *buSwati* (Swazi way of life) and *SiSwati* (Swazi language and Swazi way of life). From the discussions it also emerged that some of the practices claimed to be a Swazi way of life did not any longer fit in with life in the contemporary era.

Issues that emerged from the discussions included the men's love for their wives and children, a sense of fear, a sense of possessiveness, the need for control over women and the attitude of grading and ranking women. Many of the men articulated that they love and care for their children in ways that make them want to plan the children's future. They gave this as a reason for *kwendzisa* (arranged marriages). Most men however also said that the practice was outdated and would definitely not work well in this day and age.

Love proved to be a controversial issue. Men in various chiefdoms were divided on the subject of love for women. There were those who thought women deserved a high level

of respect and value in society, but there were also those who showed possessiveness without any sense of valuing and appreciation for their 'women'. Most had wives to whom they were not legally married. Those were *bomasihlalisane* (living together without marriage) rather than marriage relationships. Men used the term *umfati* (wife/woman) without clarifying which type of relationship they meant. Those who had not married their wives articulated that a man needs to study a woman before marrying her, however they 'study' her whilst she already renders all wifely services!

Most men portrayed a sense of possessiveness, making women seem like objects to be 'possessed' and discarded at anytime. The idea of a two-way commitment to marriage did not even exist for most men. They felt that the woman is the one who should commit to the relationship and that the man should receive more than he gives. They perceived a man's main gift to a woman is simply to marry her. Although they did not favour *sitsemu* (polygamy) they implied that women needed to be always on their toes, competing for men's attention and approval.

They said, although *sitsemu* (polygamy) was becoming irrelevant due to economic factors it helped in making women perform their best to impress men. They said *sitsemu* (polygamy) 'tames' women and persuades them to focus on their husbands more than anyone else as they try to win his appreciation. There were no indications of the idea that men had to also strive to impress their women.

Although the men dismissed polygamy as becoming irrelevant, most of them articulated that they found the idea of a man focusing entirely on one wife almost impossible. This led to the idea of grading and ranking women. Some felt that all women were not the same, as there were women good for being *bafati bekutsatfwa* (women who deserve to be married) and also women good for pleasure. The second type of woman was regarded as not fitting to be in a stable home environment performing wifely and domestic duties because of their lack of a stable character, but they were regarded as essential for sexual services to men. On this issue it became evident that they were divided because some of the men voiced that this kind of mentality is abusive and treats women as objects. These

men indicated that both types of women, who 'deserve marriage' and those considered only for 'sexual pleasure,' were equally victims of selfish men.

It also emerged from all the dialogue that men were bound by multiple forces of fear. They feared to be a failure in life. If that became inevitable, they tended to exert pressure on the women in their lives. They wanted to control women in order to have a sense of power and control. Although men discussed the issue of power and control over women extensively they did not reach any conclusive agreement.

The positive outcome of this dialogue, however, was that most men appeared to be aware of the hazards of unprotected sex for those with either multiple or just one sexual partner. They also agreed that there was a great need for men and women to talk about sexual and family matters.

### 6.3.5 Critique

*Inhloko idliwa ebandla* workshops were different from all previous workshops in the country in numerous ways. Firstly, the idea did not come from any outside organization, but from the post performance discussions of previous workshops in the various *tinkhundla* centres. Secondly, unlike all previous workshops *inhloko idliwa ebandla* was built on an authentic *SiSwati* value and practice.

Thirdly, this kind of workshop was pivotal and had a balance of performance and discussion, unlike other previous workshops in which there was more performance than discussion. In the previous workshops where the participants were mostly women there was minimal deliberation into issues because women fear to speak due to their position in this society. These men were not afraid of anyone who might victimise them for what they said. The short plays served mainly as a way of triggering the dialogue among the men as they enjoyed eating the cow's head. The plays made it easier for the men to deliberate on the issues without personalising the discussion, but making it a continuation of the play. This incorporation of dialogue into the play is one good aspect of Theatre-for-Development

Fourthly, this kind of workshop has served as a starting point for the involvement of men in discussing social issues in the country so that a substantial level of awareness on a number of social issues has been created. Fifthly, the workshops were a success in that they enabled men to get some understanding that women want the cooperation of men in dealing with social issues. The men were able to acknowledge and absorb this *unselfconsciously* because of the context afforded by 'eating the cow's head' where they could engage in discussion about these sensitive issues without having women present.

The *kudliwa kwenhloko* workshops could be repeated in the other chiefdoms and the practice extended to be effective at a broader community level. People could revive the *kudliwa kwenhloko* practice and engage in dialogue on many sensitive social issues but without the involvement of external elements such as the SNDS members. This may be just the beginning. Although the workshop has been a positive way of starting off men into participating in developmental activities, it is limited in that it allows segmentation of communities. Men do not live in isolation and therefore need to learn to engage in dialogue with women. What happened during the *inhloko idliwa ebandla* workshops is similar to the other social gatherings men have and then start talking about subject including women. The difference with the workshops is that they focused on the discussion of sexual issues within the family.

Men's engaging in dialogue in the absence of women does not help correct their shortcomings because they still talk about women using degrading words as I have illustrated above. This type of workshop runs short of creating a scenario in which men and women discuss social matters together; each expressing their concerns and then deliberating together to create a community that will be acceptable to both men and women.

#### **6.4 Conclusion**

The series of workshops that PSI and NERCHA ran in collaboration with UNICEF throughout the country was a 'top down' information-dissemination workshop where the



play was performed by commissioned professionals. However, during the post performance discussions, the women participants in the various *tinkhundla* centres voiced their worries caused by the men's lack of cooperation in HIV/AIDS related issues. The women made it clear that their attempts to combat HIV/AIDS yielded no results because of the lack of cooperation of men and their lack of commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS. Yet they are the leaders in their homes.

The women's call for help led to the establishment of a new type of men only workshop which was based on an old cultural practice of men communally eating the head of a cow when one has been slaughtered. As the men ate the meat together, within the privacy and security afforded by the context, they engaged in a dialogue. This kind of workshop brought men together to reflect on their own behaviour without involving women. As with all the workshops, this last one has not brought about immediate, permanent solutions to social problems, but has definitely created a forum where people can reflect on their own lives and ask questions. This leads to increased awareness of some issues that have previously been ignored or even denied. Sometimes the reflection has resulted in some behaviour change. More and more theatre groups are being established in communities where people engage in small workshops without involving big organizations or personnel from outside their communities.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **Conclusion**

#### **7.0 Introduction**

In this chapter I recapitulate by taking stock of the findings and observations which I arrived at in the foregoing discussions. I have divided the chapter into three subsections: the overriding and more general section, which summarises the previous chapters; the specific observations subsection, which gives answers to the questions and aims posed in the introduction chapter; and lastly my own recommendations.

#### **7.1 General Observations summarising the previous chapters**

The first chapter outlined the aim of this study which was to investigate the role and effect of Theatre-for-Development as a tool in the development of the lives of women in Swaziland. The study examined the overview background of Swaziland, paying more attention to the social status of women. It also examined the forms of performance in Swaziland and how they have been developed over the years leading to the inclusion of what is now called Theatre-for-Development. In the examination of each form of performance the study gave special attention to its role in the development of women.

The second chapter was divided into four main parts and examined the country's profile, its historical background, the social structure and the cultural practices of the people. What emerged from the chapter is that when the Swazi nation was established and expanded, it comprised groups of people who originated from the Nguni, Sotho, and Thonga factions. There were conflicting values, with some of them giving more power and respect to women whereas the presiding ones were more patriarchal. This conflict in the people's value system resulted in imposing oppressive laws on women. The chapter discussed the socialization of both boys and girls illustrating how oppressive patriarchal values were instilled in young people and resulted in internalized oppression of girls and women. However, it emerged from the study that Swazi women have always been defiant and sought to subvert their oppression in various ways.

The third chapter examined the forms of performance in Swaziland and the role of each of these in the development of women. I discussed lullabies, riddles and proverbs, storytelling, (which included folktales and a new form called life stories), praise poetry, chants, songs and dance, music, rituals at homestead level, (including taking of a wife in the customary way, paying of the bride price and wedding celebration), and rituals at national level, (including *incwala* and *umhlanga* ceremonies.)

Although lullabies are sung to babies who cannot understand the meanings of the words used, Swazi lullabies instil an ideology which instils the culture of silence and lack of complaint even when someone experiences some discomfort. Some of the lullabies discussed illustrated how they can be used as a way of training young girls who look after babies in preparation of their future roles in motherhood.

Most of the riddles and proverbs I discussed tend to instil the culture of silence among women, and they discourage any sign of assertiveness on women. As a way of using performance to attain developmental goals Swazi women may construct new proverbial expressions which will subvert the negative stereotypical teaching and start instilling in young people and themselves, positive ideologies which will make them believe in their potential to deal with situations they face. For example, instead of encouraging women to endure pain even to the point of death in abusive relationships, using the proverb, *ibanjwa ishisa*, which implies that it is credit for a woman to hold something burning hot and painful, they can use something contrary and more positive. It would be a sign of development for women to use proverbs such as *yephula lembita iyasha* (remove the stewpot from the fire, it is burning)! Such a proverb may make women aware that when the pain becomes unbearable they need to remove themselves from what is 'burning' them.

Swazi folktales have both positive and negative messages which make women feel inferior and those which portray them as having potential for assertiveness. There are also many folktales that have been changed from their original form to accommodate the

modern life that Swazi people live, so, I suggest that the folktales which instil a submissive mindset among women should be altered into new and different ones which enhance an atmosphere where women believe in themselves. The life stories I discussed subvert the culture of silence and defy the expectations of society that believes in keeping *tibi tendlu* within even if that means personal underdevelopment such various forms of abuse or even death. Women could employ life stories more as a way of encouraging one another and also as a way of demonstrating how to positively deal with challenging situations in life.

*Tibongo* are originally not a realm where Swazi women feature except for royal personnel such as queens, but the discussion of *tibongo* in this study demonstrates that some women defy the expectations of culture and take up this genre. They do so as a way of celebrating themselves and their achievements. *Tibongo* are also a way of retelling the history and experiences of a person, so as a way of asserting themselves women can compose their own *tibongo* and focus on their positive aspects and achievements. If women develop the culture of celebrating themselves it could result in their assertiveness and upliftment of their belief system. This can subvert the negative - that women have been hearing - and also saying - about themselves and which result in their undermining their self-worth.

Most of the the *tigcumshelo* (chants) and songs I discussed in the study showed a contradicting mixture of enthusiasm and despondency among the women. When they sing they portray excitement, but the *themes* of the songs portray their internalised oppression because they show the women have accepted and believe negative ideas about themselves. However, as a way of subverting the negative internalised ideology, some of the women compose new chants and songs which carry assertive messages portraying an element of self confidence.

The last part of the third chapter showed how the rituals both at homestead and national levels demonstrate how women have been made to believe that their worth is in gaining male approval. Society makes women believe that they exist to marry and when they do,

their prospective husband's family pays *lobolo*. The women get a sense of fulfilment and value when their *lobolo* is paid, but this is only because of their internalised oppression which manifests itself when the 'so called' value hits back on the women as they suffer all their life and they are forced to endure their suffering because *lobolo* was paid for them. The discussion of the *umhlanga* ritual also showed how a customary practice which was originally meant for a good cause is now an exploitation of young women.

The fourth chapter examined a brief background of the literary tradition in Swaziland; the presentation of women in the literary works of three playwrights including H.I.E. Dhlomo, a black South African pioneer of playwriting in English; Hilda Kuper, a white anthropologist who worked among Swazi people from the 1940s to the 1970s and Zodwa Motsa a Swazi woman who is actively involved in literary works to date. Dhlomo's first play *The girl who killed to save* showed how the Xhosa patriarchal society manipulated women. Through the protagonist, Nongqause, Dhlomo showed how a woman can be committed to the wellbeing of her nation. Dhlomo juxtaposed the male leaders and the young women resulting in his portrayal of the young woman as a true and committed leader of her people than the men.

Dhlomo's second play *Cetshwayo* is also a historic play, but the play's discussion showed that Dhlomo's play portray two different types of women in the characters of King Cetshwayo's chief wife Nkosikazi and his lover Bafikile. The former is docile whereas the latter is assertive and defies the expectations of their society.

The discussion of Hilda Kuper's play, *A witch in my heart* set in Swaziland demonstrated how the Swazi society can be oppressive to women. Kuper's character who appears to be the only one who attempts to subvert her society has limited means of doing so because her mindset also conforms to the same oppressive culture. Her attempts to challenge her culture end up showing the embedded internalised oppression that is instilled in women from early childhood. Kuper's play contributes to the development of women by exposing the oppressive nature of the society, but does not provide any possible means of combatting the oppression.

The discussion of Motsa's play, *The Paper Bride* has shown how the playwright goes beyond exposing the wiles of Swazi culture against women to a point where the protagonist Amanda assumes responsibility for challenging the oppression imposed on her and creating change in her environment. Motsa's play shows that bringing about change is not easy but a struggle. Although the play is written by one person, within it there are elements of Theatre-for-Development such as dialogue. Motsa's play also demonstrates how dialogue can be employed to bring about change and a point of agreement between people who have originally been of differing mindsets. All the plays discussed demonstrate how some of the Nguni cultural practices in Xhosaland, Zululand and Swaziland are oppressive to women and how women struggle to deal with the oppression.

Chapters five and six examined the evolution of Theatre-for-Development workshops among Swazi communities starting from the 'top-down' Theatre-for-Development workshops which were organized and presented to communities by the government and NGOs interested in community development - those which were devised and presented to communities by young people; those which involved whole communities but with very few men attending and finally those which involved men only. The themes of all of them demonstrated how some of the cultural practices of the Swazi people are oppressive to women. The discussion also showed how the Theatre-for-Development tool can be used as a community development tool by subverting the oppressive belief systems that the community holds.

## **7.2 Specific observations**

During the course of the study and after analysis as I reflect on it there are a number of observations which I have made including the issues addressed in the study about the Swazi society as well as the Theatre-for-Development tool. In this section I discuss the observations.

### **7.2.1 Productivity and procreativity for women**

The Swazi society believes that the vocation of women is to produce and procreate. This is taught to women from birth and they believe it. As a result of this, women accept all the cultural practices which society devises as a way of making up for any woman who appears to be unable to produce and procreate. This belief creates feelings of guilt and inadequacy for women to a point where they tolerate any arrangement that seems to remove their guilt or cater for their inadequacy. This tolerance of unfair and oppressive treatment of women has always prevailed because it was not challenged.

In order to preserve beliefs that are oppressive to women, Swazi society employs the principle of labelling. Most women would like to earn a good name for themselves and be acceptable to the patriarchal society, so they avoid any behaviour that may result in their negative label. For most women, silence becomes a safe choice, which in turn maintains the oppressive status quo. Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie observes the “intimidation of African women by men over the issues of women liberation” (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994: 64) and states this “male ridicule, aggression and backlash have resulted in making women apologetic” (ibid). However, there are women who disregard the negativism the oppressive society thwarts at them and challenge the system.

### **7.2.2 Highly gendered society**

The Swazi society is highly gendered, with clearly distinguished gender roles. There was no serious problem about the gendering of roles in earlier times, when and where both men and women lived together in their homesteads. However, this gendered nature became imbalanced when changes occurred. During the colonial era, there were political, economic and social changes which resulted in migrant labour and loss of land. In turn, all these changes affected the wellbeing of women. In addition to their own roles, women have now become over-burdened with those roles that had been assigned to men. Some of the women are even overburdened by the fact that although they are in full time employment, after work they still have to do the domestic chores specifically set aside for women. They endeavour to earn themselves a good name within the patriarchal society

which makes them tolerate this in 'golden silence'. However, the more silent the women, the more their burdens grow.

### **7.2.3 Forms of Performance**

Swaziland has a rich collection of forms of performance that can be used to affect the decisions people make. The danger of this is that the performances can be used for both oppressive and liberating purposes. Swazi society uses many forms of performance as a tool to instil in themselves especially women, all societal values, including those that encourage the oppression of women. As members of society women perform like parrots who repeat words that proclaim their own perceived inferiority. The women suffer through the principle of repetition - what they keep hearing over and over again, they eventually believe, and what they believe about themselves they eventually become! Women believe that their vocation is to be subservient to men and other women. Women can use the same practice of repeating words to subvert their oppression, by replacing them with assertive ones.

### **7.2.4 'Top-down' development**

Development that comes from the top, and is imposed on the people is not authentic development as Paulo Freire argues<sup>146</sup>. Ideally, development is determined by the one pursuing it, and stems from within, but there are cases when this may not always work. The 'top-down' development workshops that were organized by developmental organizations in Swaziland,<sup>147</sup> were a first step of development for people who have suffered from internalized oppression and had no idea of what the source of their oppression was nor how to deal with it. It is remarkable that what started as 'top-down' development has developed to a point where communities now organise their own development workshops and deal with issues affecting them in their communities.

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<sup>146</sup> See Freire, Paulo (1972) *Pedagogy of the oppressed*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.

<sup>147</sup> See chapter five, (FLAS workshops).



### **7.2.5 The importance of exposure of bad practices**

Exposing the undesirable societal practices is a first step towards development. As the fifth chapter states, development is an on going process, and not an instant solution to problems. It is about raising the awareness of people in order to work out various ways of dealing with situations. It means trying various ways, rejecting what does not work and trying something new, collectively as a community. The dramas by the three playwrights, H.I.E. Dhlomo, Hilda Kuper and Zodwa Motsa all, in varying degrees show that exposing something wrong within a society is the first step of dealing with it.

### **7.2.6 Development of whole communities**

The *inhloko idliwa ebandla* 'men-only' Theatre-for-Development workshop is a step towards raising the awareness of men about what oppresses the women they claim to love and protect. The women only strategies however do not always work, as the PMTCT workshops showed. The workshops organized by youth only were a good move, but on their own the young people cannot significantly influence society. One would assume that the men, as the 'controllers' of society in Swaziland would develop the country on their own. However, as it is, the situation is not perfect, but it demonstrates the effect of Theatre-for-Development as a developmental tool. As elsewhere in the world, in Swaziland, social problems of various natures always emerge as others are dealt with. What I find remarkable is that women called for help and were heard! The more women take initiative, open their mouths to speak the right and empowering words into their lives, is the more change they will realise in their lives.

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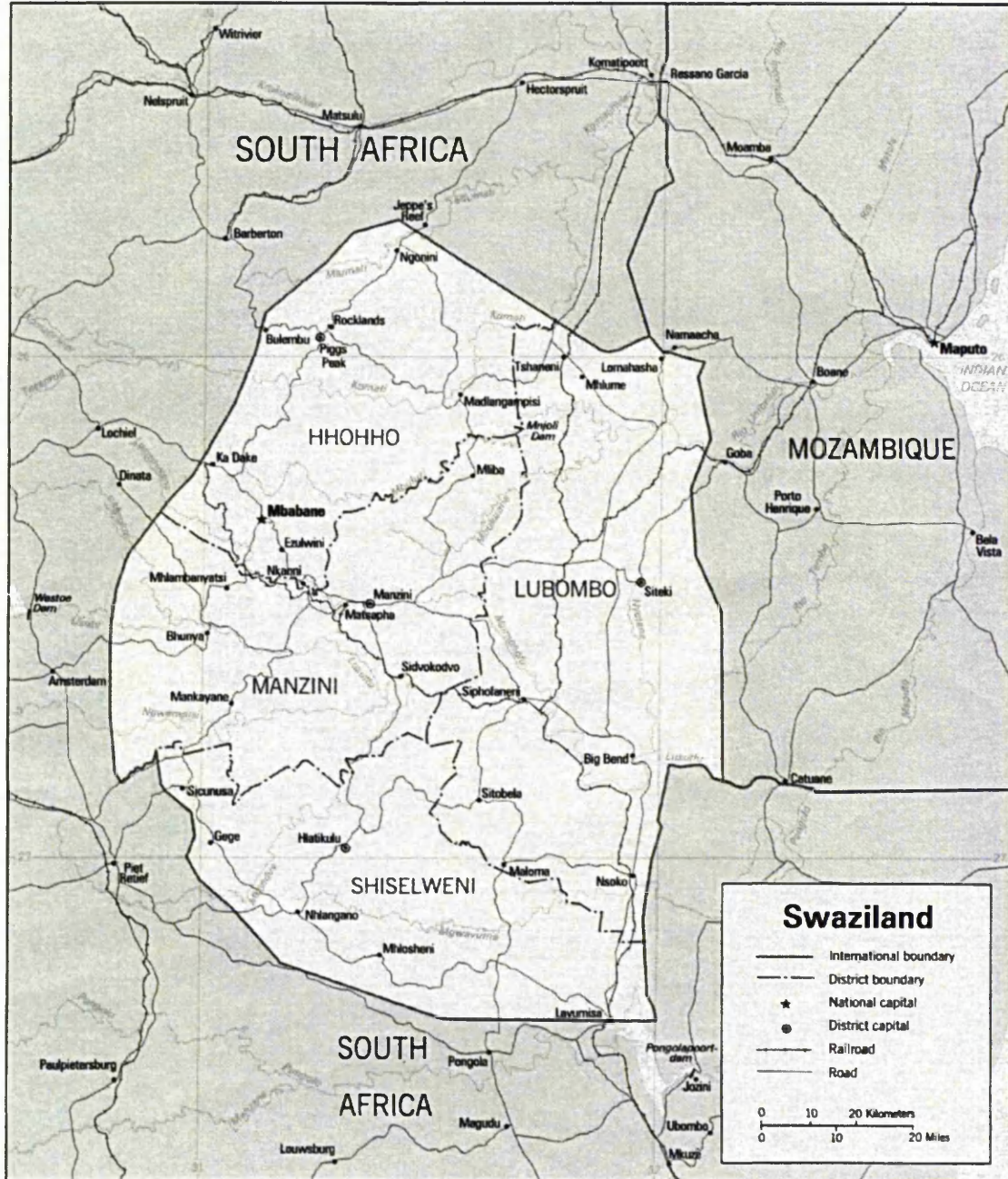
Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services: *Emuva sasentani?*  
Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services: *Khala Mdumbadumbane sive tindzaba.*  
Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services: *Nasi ke SiSwati.*  
Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services: *Ngabe ngiko na?*  
Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services: *Tentele make!*  
Swaziland Broadcasting and Information Services: *Tingoma temdzabu.*

## **Speeches**

King Sobhuza II: a wide selection of speeches (1968 -1982).

# APPENDICES

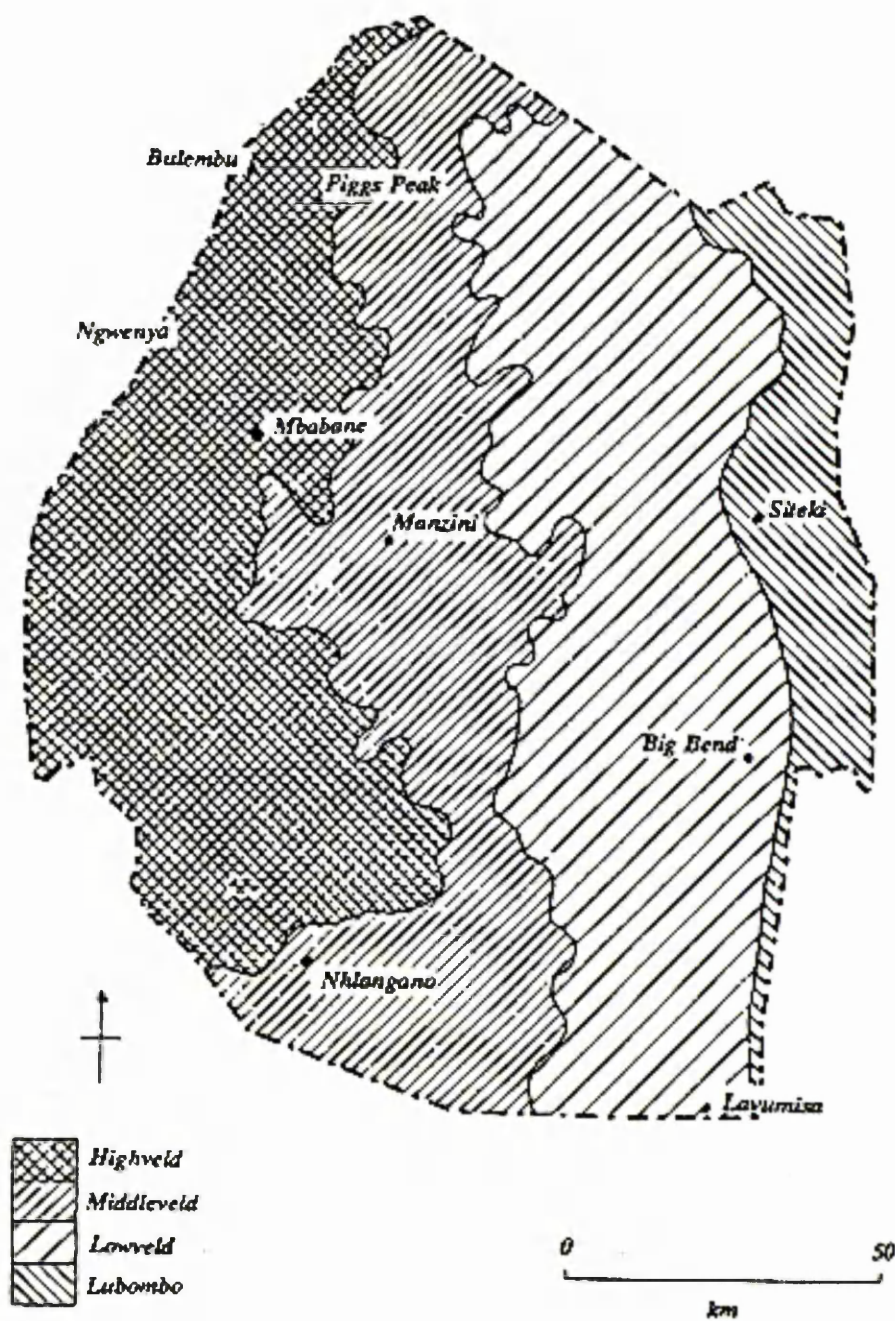
## APPENDIX 1 a –The map of Swaziland



Base 801484 (E00300) 4-90



APPENDIX 1 b – The four regions of Swaziland



APPENDIX 2 –*Incwala* Ceremony





### APPENDIX 3 – Traditional dress for Swazi women



**APPENDIX 4 –Swazi king, King Mswati III**



**APPENDIX 5 –Swazi Queen Mother Ntfombi Tfwala**





APPENDIX 6 –Swazi *Emabutfo* (regiments)



**APPENDIX 7 –*Umhlanga* Ceremony**





APPENDIX 7 – *Umhlanga Ceremony*



APPENDIX 7 –*Umhlanga Ceremony*





**APPENDIX 8 –*Lutsango* women's regiment**





APPENDIX 9 –A Man Playing *Makhweyane*



APPENDIX 10 –Men Supervising *Tintfombi Temhlanga*





**APPENDIX 11 –Umhlanga Maidens in Full Costume**



APPENDIX 12 –A Woman Playing *Makhweyane*





APPENDIX 13 –*Sibhaca* Dance



APPENDIX 14 -Princesses with *Emagwalagwala* Headgear



## APPENDIX 15 –A glossary of *SiSwati* terms

<i>Asicocisane</i> .....	Let us communicate
<i>Babe</i> .....	Father
<i>Bagijimi</i> .....	Chief runners
<i>BakaNgwane</i> .....	Those of Ngwane/ those from Swaziland
<i>Balimisi</i> .....	Agricultural instructors
<i>Baloboli</i> .....	The people who come to pay a woman's bride price
<i>Balondolozu</i> .....	The keepers
<i>Bandlancane</i> .....	The council of a chiefdom
<i>Bayeni</i> .....	The people who come to pay a woman's bride price
<i>Bemanti</i> .....	Water people
<i>Bhelebane</i> .....	Squeeze box musical instrument
<i>Bolomakhaya</i> .....	Home economists
<i>Bovu</i> .....	Red colour
<i>Bufati</i> .....	Womanhood
<i>Buganu</i> .....	Marula beer
<i>Bukhoti</i> .....	In laws' relationship
<i>Cela</i> .....	Ask
<i>Cela inkhonto</i> .....	Seek refuge
<i>Dzadze</i> .....	Sister
<i>Dzadzewetfu</i> .....	My/ our sister
<i>Edladleni</i> .....	In the kitchen
<i>Egumeni</i> .....	At the hut enclosure
<i>Elwandle</i> .....	In the sea or ocean
<i>Emabutfo</i> .....	Regiments
<i>Emachikiza</i> .....	Mentors of young women who are still virgins
<i>Emadloti</i> .....	Ancestors
<i>Emafahlawane</i> .....	Ankle rattles
<i>Emagama</i> .....	Names
<i>Emaganu</i> .....	Marula fruit / marula beer
<i>Emagebesha</i> .....	Beaded necklaces
<i>Emagwalagwala</i> .....	An array of red feathers from the gwalagwala bird
<i>Emajaha</i> .....	Young men grown to have lovers
<i>Emahewu</i> .....	A drink brewed with soft porridge
<i>Emahiya</i> .....	Colourful Swazi traditional cloths
<i>Emakhosikati</i> .....	King's wives or respectable women
<i>Emanti</i> .....	Water
<i>Emasiko</i> .....	Customs
<i>Ematalankhosi</i> .....	Those who give birth to a king
<i>Esangweni</i> .....	The area near the entry into the cattle byre
<i>Esibayeni</i> .....	In the cattle byre/ kraal
<i>Gcobisa</i> .....	Smear
<i>Gogo</i> .....	Grandmother
<i>Imbongi</i> .....	Praise poet or bard
<i>Imihambo</i> .....	Practices

<i>Imiphakatsi</i> .....	Chiefdoms
<i>Imvumulo</i> .....	Traditional dress
<i>Incwala</i> .....	First fruit ceremony
<i>Indiloko</i> .....	A cotton skirt barely longer than indlamu
<i>Indlamu</i> .....	A very short bead skirt that reveals the buttocks
<i>Indlovukati</i> .....	The great she elephant
<i>Indlu</i> .....	Hut/ house
<i>Indvuku</i> .....	A tough stick
<i>Indvuna</i> .....	A captain or minister
<i>Ingadla</i> .....	Stomp dance
<i>Inganwa</i> .....	A man with many lovers
<i>Ingati</i> .....	Blood
<i>Ingoma</i> .....	Song
<i>Inhlambelo</i> .....	Shrine
<i>Inhlanti</i> .....	A cleanser
<i>Inhlawulo</i> .....	A fine
<i>Inhloko</i> .....	Head
<i>Inhlonipho</i> .....	Respect
<i>Inkhomo</i> .....	A cow
<i>Inkhosatana</i> .....	Princess
<i>Inkhosikati</i> .....	A king's wife or a respectable woman
<i>Intfombi</i> .....	A young woman
<i>Intfombi ntfo</i> .....	A virgin
<i>Insulamnyembeti</i> .....	A cow paid to the bride's mother as a sign of wiping her tears
<i>Inyandzaleyo</i> .....	An expression for raising an alarm for help
<i>KaGogo</i> .....	In the family sacred house
<i>KaNgwane</i> .....	In the land of Ngwane (Swaziland)
<i>Kubhula</i> .....	To thresh
<i>Kubutseka</i> .....	Giving oneself to perform state duties at the king's residence
<i>Kudlalisela</i> .....	To dance in admiration to another dancer
<i>Kugidza</i> .....	To dance
<i>Kugcobisa</i> .....	To smear
<i>Kuhlakula</i> .....	To weed
<i>Kuhlambisa</i> .....	The act of a bride giving presents to her in laws
<i>Kuhlanta</i> .....	To cleanse
<i>Kujuma</i> .....	To visit a boyfriend's place and sleep over without sex
<i>Kukhonta</i> .....	Seek permission to be one of a chief's subjects
<i>Kulamuta</i> .....	A man's claiming his wife's sister or niece as a wife too
<i>Kulilitela</i> .....	To ululate
<i>Kumekeza</i> .....	Crying in the kraal when being made a wife
<i>Kungena</i> .....	To inherit a wife after her husband has died
<i>Kungewna</i> .....	To be inherited after your husband is dead
<i>Kuteka</i> .....	To make a woman a wife willingly or forcefully
<i>Kwendzisa</i> .....	Arrange marriage for
<i>Kuvuna</i> .....	To harvest or reap
<i>Labadzala</i> .....	Elders



<i>Labaphasi</i> .....	Ancestors
<i>Libandla</i> .....	Community council
<i>Libutfo</i> .....	Regiment
<i>Libovu</i> .....	Red ochre
<i>Lichikiza</i> .....	A mentor of young women who are still virgins
<i>Licilongo</i> .....	Trumpet
<i>Lidlala</i> .....	Kitchen
<i>Ligama</i> .....	Name
<i>Liguma</i> .....	Hut enclosure
<i>Ligwalagwala</i> .....	A bird or feathers for royal headgear
<i>Lihiya</i> .....	Colourful Swazi traditional cloth
<i>Lijaha</i> .....	A young man grown enough to have a lover
<i>Lijazi</i> .....	A coat
<i>Lijazi lemkhwenyana</i> .....	A condom
<i>Likhaya</i> .....	Home
<i>Likinobho</i> .....	Button
<i>Lilawu</i> .....	An unmarried ma's hut
<i>Lilima</i> .....	A communal work party
<i>Lindimpi</i> .....	Those expecting war
<i>Liphovela</i> .....	King's fiancée
<i>Liqoqo</i> .....	A board that rules before the coronation of a young king.
<i>Lobolo</i> .....	Bride Price
<i>Lugege</i> .....	The cow that is killed when the bride price is paid
<i>Luhlata</i> .....	Green or blue colours
<i>Lusekwane</i> .....	Sickle bush
<i>Lutsango</i> .....	Hedge (Swazi women's regiment)
<i>Luvungu</i> .....	A vibrating tin instrument
<i>Make</i> .....	Mother
<i>Makhweyane</i> .....	Gourd and bow musical instrument
<i>Makoti</i> .....	Bride
<i>Mamkhulu</i> .....	Senior mother
<i>Mlentengamunye</i> .....	The one-legged one (God)
<i>Myelinchanti</i> .....	The one who was there in the beginning of everything (God)
<i>Mbube</i> .....	Male lion
<i>Mntfwanami</i> .....	My child
<i>Ngentiwa Kungati</i> .....	Ignorance made me...
<i>Ngwenyama</i> .....	Lion
<i>Salukati</i> .....	Old woman
<i>Sibaya</i> .....	Cattle byre/ kraal
<i>Sibhaca</i> .....	A type of stomp dancing
<i>Sibongo</i> .....	Surname/ clan name
<i>Sicholo</i> .....	Hair bun
<i>Sidzwaba</i> .....	Swazi women's traditional black leather skirt
<i>Sidziya</i> .....	Apron or pinafore
<i>Sigcumshelo</i> .....	Chant
<i>Sigubhu</i> .....	Drum

<i>Sihlantsi</i> .....	Sitting mat
<i>Sikhali</i> .....	Spear
<i>Silo</i> .....	Beast
<i>Sinanatelo</i> .....	A praise name
<i>Singani</i> .....	Lover
<i>Siswati</i> .....	Language of the people of Swaziland
<i>Sivandze</i> .....	A small garden
<i>Teka</i> .....	Make a woman a wife, willingly or forcefully
<i>Tetfulo</i> .....	Gifts of loyalty to a king or chief
<i>Thula</i> .....	Be quiet
<i>Tibongo</i> .....	Surnames/ Clan names
<i>Ticholo</i> .....	Hair buns
<i>Tigcumshelo</i> .....	Chants
<i>Tigubhu</i> .....	Drums
<i>Timbongi</i> .....	Praise poets
<i>Tinanatelo</i> .....	Praise names/ clan praises
<i>Tindvuku</i> .....	Tough Sticks
<i>Tintfombi</i> .....	Young women (virgins)
<i>Tindvuna</i> .....	Captains or ministers
<i>Tingani</i> .....	Lovers
<i>Tingoma</i> .....	Songs
<i>Tinini</i> .....	Friends and relatives
<i>Tinkhundla</i> .....	Constituencies
<i>Tivandze</i> .....	Small gardens
<i>Tibi</i> .....	Trash
<i>Umculu</i> .....	Big book (Bible)
<i>Umcwasho</i> .....	Ritual of girls becoming chaste for a fixed period
<i>Umdlekenya</i> .....	A sexually 'used up' woman
<i>Umfati</i> .....	A woman or wife
<i>Umgaco</i> .....	A cloth belt with woolen tassels that is worn across the body
<i>Umgijimi</i> .....	A chief runner
<i>Umhlanga</i> .....	Reeds
<i>Umlamu</i> .....	The young wife a man has claimed from his wife's family
<i>Umntfwana</i> .....	A baby/ child
<i>Umntjingo</i> .....	Reed wind pipe musical instrument
<i>Umphakatsi</i> .....	Chieftdom
<i>Umtsimba</i> .....	Wedding/ wedding party
<i>Umuti</i> .....	Homestead
<i>Wengati</i> .....	Of blood

## APPENDIX 16 – Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIDS.....	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ASTG.....	Association of Swaziland Theatre Groups
CANGO .....	Coordinating Assembly of Non Governmental Organizations
DPM .....	Deputy Prime Minister's
ECHO .....	European Community of Humanitarian Organization
FLAS.....	Family Life Association of Swaziland
GNI.....	Gross National Income
HIV.....	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HUMARAS .....	Human Rights Association of Swaziland
LDS.....	Lutheran Development Service
LWF.....	Lutheran World Federation
MP.....	Member of Parliament
MC.....	Master of Ceremonies
NERCHA .....	National Emergency Response Council on HIV/AIDS
NGO.....	Non Governmental Organization
PET.....	People' Educational Theatre
PMTCT.....	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
PS.....	Principal Secretary
PSI.....	Population Services International
RDA.....	Rural Development Areas
SADC.....	Southern African Development Community
SNDS .....	Siphila Nje Drama Society
SINAN.....	Swaziland Infant Nutrition Action Network
STD.....	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
SWAGAA.....	Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse
SYUAHA.....	Swaziland Youth against HIV/AIDS
TfD .....	Theatre for Development
UN .....	United Nations
UNICEF.....	United Nations Children Educational Fund
USWAA.....	Umdlandla Swaziland Writers and Authors' Association
VTC.....	Voluntary Testing and Counseling
WLSA.....	Women and Law in Southern Africa

